

The Great Concern:
OR, A
SERIOUS WARNING
To a Timely and Thorough
PREPARATION
FOR
DEATH;

With Helps and Directions in order
thereunto.

By EDWARD PEARSE.

John 9. 4. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.

The Fifth Edition, recommended as proper to
be given at Funerals.

L O N D O N,

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three Pigeons in Cornhill, over-against
the Royal Exchange, 1698.

To the READER.

Reader,

IF thou art one, who indeed livest
in the belief of a future Life, an
Eternity of Happiness or Misery,
when Time and Days shall be no more,
I am confident the ensuing Discourse
will be grateful and welcome to thee :
I make no Apology for its plainness,
nor am I at all sollicitous touching
the censures I may fall under for pub-
lishing of it : If thou wilt read it with
an upright Heart, I question not but
through a blessing from above, it may
do thy Soul good ; sure I am, thou
wilt find the Argument most weighty,
and the Concern thereof most impor-
tant : and woe be to that Soul which
misseth the design it tends to, and
aims at. When Men ~~come~~ to die,
and find themselves launching forth
into the vast Ocean of Eternity, at
least,

To the Reader:

least when once they find themselves
ingircled in that Ocean, (which quick-
ly they do, when once Death makes its
approach) then they see that their great
Interest lay beyond this poor, vain,
perishing World, and the things there-
of; then they see that their Great
Concern was to have look'd and liv'd
beyond Time and Days, and have made
provision for an Eternal state; but
alas! alas! then 'tis too late: then
they cry out, O Eternity, Eternity!
O miserable Souls that we are! how
did Sin and the World blind and be-
witch us, that we could not ere now,
when 'tis too late, see the weight of an
Eternal Interest! Oblind and brutish
Creatures, that were taken with carnal
and sensual things, things pleasing on-
ly to a sensual Appetite; and forgot
God, the chief Good, the things of
Heaven, and a blessed Eternity, which
would have made us happy for ever.
Now to prevent these doleful Lamen-
tations, and such a dismal and
remediless

To the Reader.

remediless Shipwrack of Eternal Souls,
as also to shew them the path of Life,
and to engage them to make sure of a
blessed Eternity, while Time and Days
last, is the design of the ensuing Dis-
course, and of the dying Author in it.
And the Lord, the God of all Grace,
prosper it in order thereto. God
has kept me for a full half Year by the
Graves side; one while lifting me up,
then casting me down, and now he
seems to be speedily finishing my days;
to whom, through the infinite riches of
free Grace, I can with some comfort
and boldness say; Come, Lord Jesus,
come quickly. Amen. And now, fare-
wel vain World, farewell Friends and
Relations, farewell Eating and Drink-
ing; and blessed be God, farewell Sin
and Sinning: within a few days I
shall sin no more, nor ever be in a pos-
sibility of sinning; but shall be like my
Lord, and shall see him as he is.
And lastly, farewell, Reader.

E. P.

A Proposition for the more profitable improvement of Burials.

THe great Stupidity that is on the generality of Mankind concerning their Mortality, does manifest how needful Books of this Subject are: for although Men know, that by reason of the first Transgression, It is appointed for all Men once to die; though the Principles of this Natural Life (by which it is upheld) are so weak, that they cannot support it long; though there are many Internal Causes, that as secret Mines, may soon blow up Men, even of the strongest Constitution; and many External Causes, as a Tile from a House, or the stumble of a Horse, that may soon tumble Men into the Grave; though there are continual Representations and Spectacles of Mortality, in which Men, as in a Glass, may behold their Natural face; and though Men always carry about them the symptoms of Mortality, and the marks of Death; yet they generally live as if they should never die. In small Villages where Instances of Mortality are very rare, there, the inward thoughts of their Hearts seem to be, that they and their Houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all Generations.

A Proposition, &c.

Generations. In populous Towns and Cities, there the commonness takes away the sence of Mortality, and how sad it is to behold the unsuitable carriage of the generality of Christians at Funerals! those opportunities are usually spent in unprofitable Chat, in Mirth, in Eating and Drinking, and that sometimes to Excess: and thus the House of Mourning is turned into a House of Mirth and Feasting. To cure this evil frame, we have thought good to propound that, which we find to be the wish of the Generality of pious Persons, viz. That Books of this nature may be given at Burials, instead of Rings, Gloves, Biskets, Wine, &c. Reading and Meditation would be much more decent at such sad Solemnities, than Eating and Drinking, and putting on of Ornaments. Books of this subject would make People mind the present instance of Mortality, and affect them with such devout Meditations as this, Lord! this Tragedy that is now acting on our deceased Friend, must ere long (God knows how soon) be acted on us all; our Breath is ready to perish; the Earth is gaping for us; yet a little while and we shall be carried down into the Chambers of Death. Lord! teach us so to number
our

A Proposition, &c.

Our days that we may apply our Hearts unto true saving Wisdom. No doubt, much good may redound to the Souls of Men this way; and God be thanked, we can testify, where it has been practised, People have been made more sensible on such sad occasions.

If therefore, Reader, thou art one of those that desires to mind thine own Concern, and to stir up others to a timely and thorough preparation for Death, we question not but thou wilt approve of, and recommend to others this our Proposition: in which again, we assure thee (however some censorious Persons that take measures of us by their own narrow Spirits, may judge) we do not so much aim at our own private gain, as the publick good of Christians.

If Christians are so well-minded, as to embrace this Proposition, we think fit to insert the names of some Books that are proper for the purpose, viz. For the poorer sort, Books of 6 d. price. The Guide to Heaven, Bary's Improvement of Death, &c.

Book of 1 s. price, Pearse on Death, Flavel's Token for Mourners, Baxter's Now or Never, Burroughs of Death, Manton's Funeral Sermon, &c.

Books of 1 s. 6 d. and 2 s. Dr. Patrick's Hearts-Ease, Divine Arithmetick, Baxter of Death and Judgment, Guide to Eternity, Drexelius on Eternity, Alestree's Funeral Handkerchief, &c.

For the richer sort, Books of 4, 5, and 6 s. price; viz. Drelincourt's Defence against the fears of Death, Taylors Holy Living and Dying, How's Blessedness of the Righteous; with many others.

We may say of a Book given at Funerals, that which the Divine Herbert says of a Verse,

Viz.

A Book may find him, that a Sermon flies,
And turn a Gift into a Sacrifice.

J. Robinson.
B. Aylmer.

I

THE
Great Concern;
OR, A
PREPARATION
FOR
DEATH.

Psalm 39. 13.
O spare me, that I may recover
strength, before I go hence, and
be no more.

CHAP. I.

*Which contains an Introduction, and an
Explication of the Words of the Text,
with the general Truth of them, and
therein the Foundation of our intended
Discourse.*

TO walk with God here on
Earth, while we live; and to be
ready to live with God for ever
in Heaven, when we ~~come to~~
die, is the Great Work we have to do, the
Great Concern we have to mind, in our
B present

present Pilgrimage. To ~~grow~~ ^{become} great and high in the World, to build our Names and Families, to live a life of sensual pleasures and delights, spending our days in mirth; these are low, mean, ~~poor things~~ ^{groveling}; ~~things~~ ^{all manner} infinitely beneath the dignity of a Soul, and altogether unworthy of the least of its care and solicitude: but to know God, to love God, to obey God, to delight in God, to contemplate the glorious Excellencies and Perfections of God, to live upon God, and to live to God; upon him as our chief good and happiness, and to him as our last end, and withall to be found ready at last to live with him for ever, to enter upon the beatific Vision, and to pass into that life of Love and Holiness, which the Saints and Angels live above, being made perfect in the Vision and Fruition of the God of Glory; this is truly Noble, this is worthy of the care and solicitude of Souls. To promote these things, and more especially the latter, is my design in fixing my Meditations on this Scripture, which I am the rather induced to do, because I am apprehensive, that the time of my going hence, when I shall be seen no more, is

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is drawing very ^{near} nigh. The words are, a holy and pathetical wish and desire, breathed out into the bosom of God by the man after his own heart: and that when under sore and heavy afflictions: ~~under~~ grievous sickness, ~~say some:~~ ^{either} ~~under~~ great straits and distresses, by reason of Absalom's rebellion and conspiracy against him, ~~say others.~~ In this wish or desire of his, you may note three things. *Meditation of the Psalmist*

1. What that is which he wisheth for, or desires of God; and that is, sparing mercy, O spare me.

2. The end of ~~this wish or desire of his~~, and ~~that is~~, the recovery of strength: O spare me that I may recover strength. *Cause of his desire*

3. The ground or motive which induced him to make this desire for this end, and that was, the near approach of his death, in these words, Before I go hence, and be no more ~~seen~~. I will briefly paraphrase the words for the opening of them, and then give you the sum of them, as also my intendment from them, in one general Position. *Inferences to be drawn*

O spare me, that is, cease to smite and afflict

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*Cessa percutere
& affigere,
Ec. Mol.*

*Leniter mecum
age. Mar.*

*Abstule ali-
quantulum
manus tuas à
flagellando.
Afenoch.*

others. That I may recover strength ; that

*Ut respirem
ante mortem
& tranquillus
animam meam
in manum tu-
am deponam.
Mol.*

I may recruit my self a

little, ~~sith~~ one. That I

may have a breathing
time before my death, and
being well composed, may

lay down my Spirit, and
commit it into thy hand, ~~say others.~~
That I may grow strong in Grace and Holi-
ness, ~~say others~~ : That I may finish my

course, and fight a good fight, obtain-
ing the victory through a happy death,
~~say others.~~ The sum is, that I may set
things right in my Soul, and get into a
more ready posture for ~~my~~ death and
dissolution, which seems to be near at
hand. Before I go hence, and be no more,

*Antequam mo-
rior in hanc vi-
tam nunquam
reverſurus. Jun.*

that is, before I die, never
more to return into this
Life , before I quit this
World,

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World, and bid adieu to this mortal Life, to be no more in the Land of the Living, to be no more in this World, to do any thing for God or my Soul: For (as one well observes) *David* doth not here suppose Death to be the utter end, or annihilation of Man, the putting of a Man out of Being: But his meaning is, if God ~~did~~ still go on to afflict him, as he had done, he must suddenly die, ~~suddenly~~ go off the Stage of this World, and go down to the Bars of Death, to the Gates of the Grave: where, as to any thing that is to be done for God, or a Mans soul, it is, as if he were out of Being; and where he will be kept for ever from returning any more to this Life, or any opportunity of ever doing any thing for another World. It is a phrase like to, and of the same importance with that, *Job 16. 22.* Where *Job* speaks of himself: *When a few years are come; then shall I go the way, whence I shall not return: Not return, that is, not any more to this Life; not return to do any thing for GOD or my Soul:* The sum of the whole seems to be this much; the good Man's afflictions were

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so pressing and heavy upon him, that ~~they did even~~ bow him down to the Grave, and he ~~really~~ looked upon himself, as a dying Man, as one going down to the dust of the Earth: where he knew full well, nothing was to be done for another life, and from whence there was no return to this life to be expected ~~any~~ more, and therefore he begs a breathing time, a little space, wherein to recover himself out of all present distempers and discomposures of heart, and to set all things right in the matters of his soul; thereby fitting and preparing himself the better for his departure out of this World: he begs a time of respite wherein to prepare himself, and make ready for a dying hour. This is the sum of what he ~~desires~~ *aims* at, and pleads with God for, according the Observation, and therein the sum of my intendment shall be this;

It is most
utmost **Desire.** That *is* a very desirable thing, and a business of the highest ~~moment~~ *importance* to the Children of Men, to have all things ~~set~~ *ready* right, and well ordered, and composed in the matters of their Souls, before they leave

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I leave this World, to get all the spiritual concerns of their Souls into the best posture they can, before a dying hour comes.

David, a holy Man, a Man in covenant with God, yea a Man after God's own heart, doth yet (you see) pray for sparing mercy, for a breathing-time, a time of respite, here in this World before he goeth off the Stage: And why so? That he might recover strength, that he might set things right in the matters of his Soul; that he might make himself more ready, and get his spiritual concerns into a better posture, for a dying hour; and this he looked at, and made out after, as that which was most desirable, and of the highest importance to him, as indeed 'tis to all. You have a Scripture not unlike to this. Job 10. 20, 21. Are not my dayes few? A cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go, whence I shall not return, even to the Land of Darkness, and of the shadow of Death. That I may take comfort a little, that I may recover a little, that I may have a breathing time, that I may recover my

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self,

8 *The Great Concern ; or,*

self, and gather up my Spirits ; so I find the phrase expounded. He seems to desire a breathing time ; the better to compose himself, and the matters of his Soul, for a dying hour. And indeed, 'tis the concern of us all, to set all things right in our Souls, and to get into the readiest posture, that possibly we can, against a dying hour ~~comes.~~ I shall first briefly evince this Truth, and then make some practical improvement of it.

C H A P. II.

Wherein is shewn the exceeding great weight of dying Work, and entream difficulty of a dying Hour, as the first Evidence of our Assertion.

and remember
Dying Work, my Beloved, is great Work, and a dying Hour is a difficult Hour ; and therefore we had need have all things well ordered, and ready ~~in the Matters~~ of our Souls against that Time, that Work, that Hour comes. I will lay the weight of dying Work, and the difficulty of a dying hour before you in four Propositions.

First Proposition is this (That Death in it

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it self, and in its own nature (if we look no further) is a very terrible thing; and we had need have all things ~~set~~ right in our Souls, all things in order, when we come to encounter ~~with~~ it; The Philosopher, who ~~lookt not beyond~~ the natural notion of Death, called it πάντων τῶν φοβερῶν φοβερώτατον. *Arist. the most terrible of all terrible things.* And in Job 18. 14. the Holy Ghost himself calls it, *The King of Terrors: His confidence* (speaking of a wicked Man) *shall bring him to the King of Terrors, i.e. to Death*, which is most formidable, indeed 'tis therefore called the King of Terrors, because it is the greatest and strongest Terror, and Death must needs be terrible in it self,

1. Because it deprives ~~us~~ of all our sweet Comforts and Enjoyments ~~here~~ in this World, and puts an eternal period to our fruition of them; ~~here~~ we enjoy much good, many streams which run pleasantly on ~~each~~ hand of us (it may be) but when Death comes, ~~that~~ deprives us of all. *Naked came I into the World, and naked shall I return, Job i. 21. So the Apostle, We brought nothing into this World, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out,* speaking as to our outward Comforts

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here,

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here, 1 Tim. 6. 7. The Psalmist to the same effect, Psal. 49. 17. speaks of a rich man; *He shall carry nothing away; His Glory (saith he) shall not descend after him.* Death, as one observes, is the greatest Leveller in the World, it levels Scepters and Plow-shares, it makes the Prince as poor as the Peasant.

2. Because it dissolves the Union between the Soul and the Body: ~~Death is~~ indeed the rendring of Body and Soul, (~~those old and loving Companions~~)

disunion
f. ~~stander.~~ Now all ~~disunions~~, (as a worthy Divine observes) are uncomfortable, and some ~~disunions~~ are terrible: And, as some ~~disunions~~ are terrible, so those are of all others most terrible, ~~that do rend them from us which are~~ most dear to us. Now what Union so

Separation
is a great
and most
dear to us
disunion
near as that between the Soul and Body? and therefore what ~~disunion~~ so terrible, as the dissolution of this Union?

The dissolving the Union between a Man and his Wife is terrible; because they are nearly united each to other: but the dissolving the Union between Soul and Body, is more terrible, because the Union is more near and close. A Man and his Wife *are one flesh*: but the Soul and
Body

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II

Body make but one Person: now Death dissolves this Union. While we live the Souls dwells in the Body, informs the Body, acts in and by the Body: it hath a great influence upon, and is greatly influenced by the Body: But when Death comes, then the Soul and Body part, till the Resurrection; one returning to the dust, whence it came, the other to God who gave it, Eccles. 12. 7.

3. It is the destroying and demolishing of the body of Man, that famous and curious Fabrick, and a bringing it into dust and putrefaction, Psal. 90. 3. It turns a living body into a dead Carcass, a lifeless lump of Clay, and causeth it to become meat for Worms to feed on, Job 19. 26. The body of Man is a very curious piece of Wormanhip, such as wherein the infinite power and wisdom of God is much seen and manifested, Psal. 139. 14, 15. But when Death comes, it maims and demolishes all, stains all its beauty, and draws a Veil upon all its Glory. Sicknels often makes a Man's Beauty to consume away like a Mint, as you have it, Psal. 39. 11. But Death utterly defaces it, and draws a Veil upon it, that turns his beauty in-

to

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to blackness and deformity. One of the Ancients, standing by *Cesar's* Tomb, wept, saying, Where is now the beauty of *Cesar* ? What now is become of all his *Magnificence* ? In a word, as Life is the sweetest of all outward Mercies, so Death is the sharpest of all outward Afflictions : The pains of it are pains to a Proverb : The sorrows of it are sorrows to a Proverb : *The sorrows of death compass me about*, Psal. 116. 3. Now if Death be thus terrible in it self ; then judg ye whether ~~we had not need~~ to have all things ready, and in order when it comes.

Salon Second Proposition is ; That in a dying hour ~~the Devil~~ is most fierce and terrible in his assaults and temptations upon the Soul. ~~The Devil~~ is in Scripture called a *Roaring Lion* : And is usually most so against the poor People of God, when they come to die : *Then he hath wrath, because he knows his time is short* : To allude to that, *Rev. 12. 12.* when a Man or Woman comes to die, the Devil knows he hath but a short time to tempt, to vex, to terrifie that Soul in ; and therefore then usually he. excercises great Wrath ; then he stirs up all his Wrath, all his Malice, all his Cruelty against

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gainst him; he sees this is the last
~~cast he is like to have for it, the last~~
on-set he is ever like to make upon the
Soul's Faith and Comfort, and that
now the Battel is to be won or lost
for ever; therefore now he roars
and rages terribly indeed, now he dis-
charges all his ~~Murdering~~ Pieces a-
gainst the Soul, to make Batteries, if
possible, upon the Souls Fort of Salva-
tion, and to shake its foundation of Life
and Happiness. The Devil is the Ene-
my of Souls, *Mal. 13. 25.* and his En-
mity works especially one of these two
ways: Either first to keep them from
Life and Happiness; and here he ~~acts~~
rather like an Angel of Light, than a
Roaring Lion: ~~He~~ works rather in a
way of Flattery, than in a way of Ter-
ror. Hence we read of his *Wiles, Me-
thods, Devices,* and the like; his cunning
and fallacious workings, ~~that~~ by to
destroy Souls. Or, secondly, to trou-
ble and torment Souls in their way to
Life and Happiness; and here he is in-
deed like a Roaring Lion, ~~and never~~
more, than when we come to die. There
are among others two seasons, where-
in the Devil is most fierce and terrible

on the approach of Death in

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in his assaults upon the Soul. The first is, when a Man is going from Sin to Grace, when he is fully resolved to close with Christ, to shake off the yoke of Sin, and to take upon him the yoke of ~~the~~. The second is; when a Man is going from Grace to Glory: when he is going off the Stage of Time to Eternity; when a man begins to live the spiritual life, and when a man comes to die the natural death. I know, first, That as for his own Children, he usually lets them alone, when they come to die: he is afraid to have them disturbed; though sometimes he cannot forbear, but torments them before their time. *Secondly*, God can, and sometimes does chain him up, so that ~~he shall not be able to~~ trouble and torment the Saints in their passage out of this World: yet ~~still I say~~, for the most part he ~~does~~ fiercely assaults them then; and doubtless, there are but ~~very~~ few of the Children of God, but ~~to~~ meet with ~~very~~ sore assaults from Sathan ~~when they come to die~~; then he turns Accuser; then he charges the Soul with all its sins; then he tells him, he is an Hypocrite, that all his profession hath been nothing but a delusion, and the

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the like. Now is Sathan thus fierce and terrible in his assaults upon the Soul in a dying hour? surely then we had need have all ready against that hour comes.

3. The third Proposition is this; That in a dying hour Conscience is most awakened; and so ~~most quick and smart~~ in its ~~Threats and Charges against~~ the Soul, if all be not right within; and therefore we had need have all so in that hour. There ~~are~~ three seasons in which Conscience is ~~most~~ awake in the Soul. First, when God begins to deal with the Soul in order to Life and Salvation; then God lets Conscience loose upon a Man. Hence we read of them, that they were pricked at their heart, in the sense of sin: the word is, they were pricked through and through, Acts 2. 97. And saith Paul, When Sin revived, I died, Rom. 7. 9. ~~That is, in the fight of my~~ sin, which was wrought in ~~me~~ by the Law of God, I was made to see ~~my~~ self lost and miserable, and awakened out of ~~my~~ security. Secondly, when the Soul is under some ~~smart and notable~~ affliction from the hand of God: This is evident in that instance of Joseph's Brethren, whose consciences were awakened,

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awakened, when they were in distress,
and charged them with the guilt of
their sin in selling their Brother, *Gen.*
42. 21. Thirdly, When a Man comes
to die, when the Visions of Death and
the Grave are before him : Oh ! you lit-
tle think, how strict Conscience will be
in its search, how sharp in its charge,
and how severe in its censure in a Dy-
ing Hour : Then if there be but the least
frown in God's Face towards the Soul,
the least flaw in his Peace, the least blot
or blur in his Evidences ~~for the Soul~~ : if
there be but the least stain upon the
Soul, the least Sin ~~unrepented of~~, un-
repented of, it is ~~a thousand times~~
but Conscience will take notice of it,
and charge the Soul with it. ~~Oh~~
you will find a great deal of diffe-
rence between Conscience upon a Bed
of Ease, and Conscience upon a Sick-
bed ; between Conscience in an Hour of
Health and worldly Prosperity, and Con-
science in a dying Hour : In the one,
great things bear but little weight ; but
in the other, little things usually bear
great weight in Conscience : Then the
Language of Conscience to the Soul is,
These and these things hast thou done ;
thus,

o more
than
probable
at any
betwixt

Preparation for Death, *stands*

thus and thus ~~things~~ *stand* with thee;
at best, Grace is thus and thus weak, Cor-
ruptions thus and thus strong, Tempta-
tions thus and thus prevalent, the Heart
thus and thus out of frame, the Spirit
thus and thus alienated from God, and
the like: Hence 'tis that at Death ~~there~~
~~are~~ such confessions, ~~as you have some-~~ *are made*
~~times from Men and Women~~, that now
they will send for ~~some~~ *are sent* godly Ministers
or Christian to pray with ~~them~~, and for
them; though perhaps they could ~~not~~ *never*
endure Prayer all ~~that~~ *was* ~~life time~~ before.
Now if in a dying hour, Conscience be
thus quick and fierce in its threats and
charges against the Soul; then surely ~~we~~ *was*
had need, and 'tis greatly our concern, *in it*
to have all ready, all in order, against
that hour comes. *be prepared*

The fourth Proposition is this, That *time*
in a dying Hour we ~~shall~~ *must* have to do
with God, in a very stupendous and
amazing way, in such a way as may well
startle and affright us to think of it:
We are said to have to do with God here,
Heb. 4. 13. We have here to do with
God in Duties, in Ordinances, in Mer-
cies, in Afflictions & Indeed we had as
good never have to do with these, un-
is an hour of peculiarly serious and solemn intercourse with God -
while below God manifests himself
to us It is the manifestation of

Gods presence alone that can
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or men less we have to do with God in these
suffering but though we have to do with God
profitable here, while we live; yet know, we shall
but not have to do with God in another, guests
different way, when we come to die; in such a
while he way as may well overwhelm us to think
present of it. I shall give it you in three steps:
he man Then we have to do with God imme-
at death diately; with God immediately, as our
how many Judge; with God immediately, as our
question Judge for Eternity: And, O how loud
to do these things call upon us to get all in
well order in the matters of our Soul, against
by ourselves a dying hour comes?
in the

3 following 1. When a Man comes to die, he
gradually has to do with God immediately; and
moment that is an astonishing thing. In death
the Body crumbles to dust; but the Soul
returneth to God who gave it: ~~to the~~
Holy Ghost tells us, Eccles. 12. 7. The
Body, which came from the dust, crum-
bles to dust again; but the Soul, ~~that~~
entering goeth into God's immediate presence,
to meet to deal and to treat with him, as it were
face face to face: The Soul is always with
God, and cannot possibly be out of his
presence, Psal. 139. 7. And yet here
the Holy Ghost tells us, when we die,
the Soul returns to God; intimating,
that

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that then the Soul goes into the immediate presence of God, and has more immediately to do with him, than here he was ever wont to have; then he beholds his ~~naked~~ Majesty and Glory. Now what an astonishing thing is this? You will find (if you observe) that the Saints of God, ~~the~~ the holiest of them, when they have ~~dealt with~~ God in a more immediate way than ordinary, they have been overwhelmed by it: Take for an instance Daniel, who, upon receiving Visions from God, tells us, *there remained no strength in him: That his comeliness was turned into corruption, Dan. 10. 8.* I might instance also in John, who upon a view of, and converse with Christ, that was a little more immediate than ordinary, fell down at his feet, as dead, Revel. 1. 17. Also that of Jacob, *I have seen the Lord face to face, and yet my life is preserved,* (says he) intimating, it was a wonder that he could so immediately see God, and live, Gen. 32. 10. Now if we are to deal with God immediately, when we come to die, we had need have all in order, before a dying hour comes.

2. When

20 The Great Concern; or,

2. When a Man comes to die, he has to do with God immediately, as his Judge; as one that is to try him for his life; to pass sentence upon his Soul; to determine his state in Righteousness, ~~meriting~~ out Life, or Death, Happiness, or Vengeance to him in the other World: And is not this an astonishing and an amazing thing? Then (saith Solomon, speaking of Death) Shall the dust return to earth, as it was, and the spirit return to God who gave it, Eccles. 12. 7. ~~At death the Spirit returns to God; but it is to God, who is to~~ Judge, ~~to~~ determine his future condition for him. We must all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ; and every one must give an account of himself to God: So the Scripture tells us, Rom. 10. 12. And, It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the Judgment, Heb. 9. 27. When a Man comes to die, that which is immediately before him, is the Judgment of God; the strict, the righteous, the impartial Judgment of God: Then away goes the Soul into the immediate presence of God, as sitting upon a Throne of Judgment, to pass a sentence of Life, or Death, Salvation, or Damnation, upon him: And

blazes before us (believe
the resurrection of the
great Universal who
goes into the dust of this

Preparation for Death. 21

(believe it) we had need have all things set right, and well ordered in our Souls, when we come thus to deal with him: we had need have all things well ordered, and set right in the matters of our Souls, when we come to deal with God, but as sitting upon a Throne of Grace; ^{but} much more, when we come to deal with him, as sitting upon a Throne of Judgment, to conclude and determine our future condition, ^{what} it shall be. Judgment is an astonishing and terrifying thing; *the bearing of it made Felix tremble: or (as the word is)* it turned him into terror or affrightment; *Acts 24. 25.* And the Apostle calls it, *the terror of the Lord*, 2 Cor. 5. 11. Now when a Man comes to die, then he says, or may say; Now I am to deal with the great God, the Judge of all: Now I must appear before his righteous Tribunal, and have the state of my Soul determined for Life, or Death, Salvation, or Damnation in the other World. O how great a thing is this!

3. When a Man comes to die, he has to do with God immediately, as his Judge for Eternity: and this speaks it yet more terrifying and astonishing:
For

22 *The Great Concern; or,*

For though a Man is then to deal with God immediately, and that as his Judge too; yet if it were but for a time, for some short term of years, it would not be altogether such a terrifying and amazing thing: ~~but~~ ^{now} it is for Eternity; and therefore his Judgment is called *Eternal Judgment*, Heb. 6. 2. Hence *Austin*, speaking of Death, calls it *Ostium Aeternitatis*, the Gate of Eternity, i. e. the Gate or Door that lets Men out into Eternity; an Eternity of Life, or Death, Salvation, or Damnation; the sentence which God will then pass upon the Soul, will be an eternal sentence; and the Soul must be eternally under the execution of it, whether it be for Life, or Death, Salvation, or Damnation. When a Man comes to die, hee then sees himself launching forth into the great Ocean of Eternity; he sees his eternal All to be immediately at stake, and his eternal state to be immediately determined by the great and Holy God: now he sees he must shoot the Great Gulf, and take up his abode in the Eternal Region: This fills him with amazement. O now, says he, a sentence must pass upon me once for all;

Preparation for Death. 23

all; now I must shoot the Great Gulf;
now I must launch forth into the great
Ocean, where neither bounds, ~~nor~~^{nor}
bottom is to be found for ever: now
I must enter upon Eternal Joys, or
Eternal Flames; an endless life, either
with God or Devils, in Heaven or Hell:
Now I shall find Infinity and Eter-
nity combine to do their utmost, to
make me happy or miserable for ever:
Now I must become the immediate ob-
ject either of infinite Wrath, or infinite
Love, infinite Hatred, or infinite Delight,
and that for ever. Now I must hear
from God, either, *come thou blessed,* or, *depart thou cursed,* and that for ever.
~~And O what an astonishing thing is~~
~~this!~~ O Eternity, Eternity! O vast E-
ternity! O great Eternity! O bound-
less Eternity! One serious view of it is
enough to amaze a poor Soul, looking
upon it at a distance: But how much
more amazing must it ~~needs~~ be, when
it shall be immediately before the Soul,
and he sees he must enter upon it the
next hour? O then it will be amazing
indeed, ~~astonishing~~ indeed: This one
thing, Eternity, puts infinite sweetness
into Mercies, and infinite bitterness into
Sufferings:

Muse 24. The Great Concern ; or,

Sufferings : the thoughts of this ~~was that~~
~~which did~~ so much amaze that good
Man, who sitting in a deep Muse a long
time, and being asked the reason of it,
was silent, and being asked again and a-
gain, at length broke into these Words ;
For ever, for ever, for ever. ~~for ever, and for~~
~~near a quarter of an hour together spake~~
~~nothing else~~ : thereby telling them that
asked him, that it was the thoughts of
this same for ever, that so much ama-
aze ~~sed him~~ : And if you were more in the
thoughts of the weight of Eternity,
you would see it were an astonishing
thing indeed : And this is that which
makes dying work such a weighty
work, and a dying hour such a difficult
hour. ~~I will close this Head, and with~~
~~that, this demonstration, with a saying~~
I have read in one of the Ancients ; That
is not to be accounted (says he) an evil
death, which has had a ~~good~~ life prece-
ding it, nor doth any thing make death
terrible, but that which follows death ;
therefore they which must necessarily die,
are not much to concern themselves, what
falls out to cause death, but whither by
death they are constrained to go, whither
death carries them. It is a great saying,
and

Preparation for Death. 25

and indeed 'tis no great matter, when we die, or how we die, or what is the occasion of our death: But it is whither Death carries us, and where Death sets us down; whether in a blessed or wretched Eternity; ~~whether with God, or Devils; in Heaven, or Hell?~~ Well then, if Death be thus terrible in its own nature: If in a dying hour the Devil be so fierce and terrible in his assaults upon Souls; if Conscience be so awakened and smart in its Charges and Accusations; if then we must have to do with God immediately, and as our Judge, ~~yes~~, as our Judge for Eternity, as one that will determine the Eternal condition of our Souls, in unspeakable Happiness, or unspeakable Misery; ~~then~~ surely dying work is great work, and a dying hour is a difficult hour. ~~It then greatly concerns us to have all ready, and all in order, in the matters of our Souls, against the time thereof comes.~~

It is not how when or where we die but the consequences of death, that make it so important a concern
C CHAP.
and shows the need of preparation

C H A P. III.

Which sheweth the Glory, Sweetness, and Blessedness of the attainment of having all things set right in the matters of our Souls, before a dying hour comes, which will further evince the truth asserted.

AS dying work is weighty work, and a dying hour is a difficult hour ; so to have all things set right, all well ordered and composed, in the matters of our Souls, ~~again~~ ^{when such an hour comes}, is as high, a sweet, a blessed Attainment, an attainment which carries infinite sweetness and desirableness in it : A taste of which I shall give you in two things only. (1.) Hereby we ~~come to be~~ glorious Conquerours over Death and the Grave. (2.) Hereby ~~we come to have~~ abundant entrance ministered to us into Heaven and Glory. And my Beloved, what more ~~sweet and~~ desirable than this ? Surely this speaks it to be a very sweet and blessed attainment. *we*

1. Hereby we come to be glorious Conquerours over Death and the Grave. Death is an Enemy, 'tis the last Enemy the

Preparation for Death. 27

the Children of God have to grapple and conflict with: *The last Enemy that is to be destroyed is Death, 1 Cor. 15. 26.* And

being the last Enemy, in conquering this ~~they~~ ^{we} conquer all, conquering this ~~they~~ ^{we} are compleat and Eternal Conquerours:

Now, by having all things set right in the matters of our Souls, all things ready, and in order for a dying hour, we

come to conquer this last Enemy; ~~yea,~~ ^{yea,} to get a glorious conquest over it: Hereby

Death comes to be swallowed up of Victory, as you have the expression, 1 Cor. 15. 54. Hereby we are more than Conquerours

over it, Rom. 8. 37. Take the Conquest which this gives us over Death, in these three things.

1. Hereby the Soul is ~~carried~~ ^{carried} above the fear of Death: In Heb. 2. 15. We read of some, *Who all their life-time*

were subject to bondage through fear of Death; And, if in their life-time, much more ~~when they come to~~ ^{when they come to} a dying hour;

Then Conscience (as you have heard) is more awake: Oh the Fears, the Terrors, the Hell upon Earth, that the sight

of Death's approach fills many a poor Soul withal! But now take a Soul that has all things right, and in order in his

28 The Great Concern; or, *various*

spiritual concerns, and he is ~~carried~~ above the fear of this King of Terrors; and that when made as terrible, as the ~~vill~~ and malice of Men can possibly make it: He can converse with his last Enemy as one that hath lost his sting and power, and so without the least fear or dismayedness of Spirit: ~~None of these things move me, says Paul, neither count I my life dear unto my self, that I may finish my course with joy.~~ His afflictions did not move him, did not terrifie him; but if Death should come, what then? Why that shall be welcome too, saith he, *Ad.* 20.24. Who is afraid of a conquered enemy, an enemy which a Man seeth dead and slain in the Field? One that has all things ready for a dying hour, he sees Death to be a conquered enemy, an enemy conquered by the Death of Christ; and so is ~~carried~~ above the fear of it.

2. Hereby the Soul is enabled in a holy manner to triumph over Death, and even to scorn and contemn it; which is an higher Conquest still. A Man that has all things set right, and well ordered in the matters of his Soul, he is not only carried above the fear of Death; but he rides in triumph

to see his disarmed over
of all his terrors and
the enemy with

art
I am
in a
strait
behind
two -

Preparation for Death. 29

over it, as one that divideth the spoil: He can with boldness and comfort challenge this last Enemy of his, and even dare it to do its worst to him. *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* (saith the Apostle.) *The sting of Death is Sin, the strength of Sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1. Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57. As if he should say, Death, you talk of a Sting; but where is it? Grave, you would threaten us with Victory and overthrow; but do your worst, Conquer us if you can. As a Man that has disarmed his Enemy, thrown him upon his back, says to him; O Sir, where is your Sword? Where is your Pistol? Where is the Execution you threatned? Do your worst.

3. Hereby the Soul comes to be able, solemnly to choose and desire Death; yea, to ~~choose~~ and rejoyce in Death; as that which of an Enemy is become a Friend, and an Inlet into all Happiness to him. So 2 Cor. 5. 5, 6, 8. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who hath al-

30 The Great Concern ; or,

So given unto us the earnest of his Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord ; We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord. So Phil. 1. 22, 23. But if I live in the flesh, this is the Fruit of my Labour ; yet what I shall choose, I wot not ; for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.

Mark, he desires ~~Death~~, ~~he~~ chooses Death, as that which is a Friend to him, and an ~~inlet~~ into his Happiness. Such an one can say, as ~~I have~~ read a German Divine did, when dying ; 'I am ready (~~say~~ ~~he~~) and desire to be gone out of this Life, in which all things are not onely full of Miseries and Calamities ; but which is to be lamented, all things are full fraught with Sin : I say, I desire to pass into that Life in which there is no Sin, no Misery. Yea, more, such an one can exult, and rejoyce in Death. Luke 2. 29, 30. Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace, according to thy Word ; for mine eyes have seen thy Salvation.

They

Preparation for Death. 31

They are words of joy and exultation in the light of Death's approach. The Child of some tender and indulgent Father, being abroad at sojourn, and seeing a Messenger come from his Father, to fetch him home; how does he ~~exult~~ ^{welcome his approach} and rejoice? O (says he) my Father hath sent for me home! now I must go live with ~~my Father~~, to eat and drink at my Father's Table, to ~~live~~ ^{stand} in my Father's Presence, enjoy my ~~Father's~~ ^{his} Love and Counsels! And this he rejoices in, and exultingly embraces the Messenger. ^{Is the} ~~Is the~~ ^{very} ~~very~~ case here, the Soul having all things ready, all things set right within, when Death comes, 'tis but as a Messenger to him, to fetch him home to his Father's House, which he can welcome and embrace with Joy. O (says he) my Father has sent for me home, home to Heaven, there to live immediately in his Presence, and upon his Fulness; and now I shall be for ever with my Father; now I shall for ever feast my Soul with my Father's Love, and the constant views of my Father's Face: Now I shall see him Face to Face, whom here I could never see, but through a Glass darkly: Now I

32 *The Great Concern ; or,*

shall see, and be for ever in the embraces of my ~~sweet~~ Lord ; my Lord that bled for me, that died for, that *trod the Wine-press alone for me* ; now shall I enter into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God : I have hitherto been in bondage, in bondage to Satan, in bondage to my own Heart, which has all along wretchedly imposed upon me ; But now I shall enter upon the Glorious Liberty of the Children of God : Now I shall *partake of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light* : Now I shall bathe my Soul in the Chrystal Streams of undefiled Pleasures, running fresh along the Banks of Eternity at my Father's right hand : Now I shall spend a whole Eternity in Praises, Doxologies, and Hallelujah's to God, and the Lamb : Now I shall have all my Spots and ~~Wounds~~, my Sins and Sorrows done away at once : Now shall I sigh no more, and which is infinitely better, I shall sin no more for ever ; no more complain of dark visions, and short visits from God ; no more complain of distances and alienation between Him and my Soul ~~for ever~~ : There shall be no more interruption of Communion with my ~~sweet~~ Saviour ; but I shall stand.

Preparation for Death. 33

stand in his Presence, and behold his Face for evermore. In a word, hereby Death, the King of Terrors, becomes the King of Comforts to the Soul; and a Man ~~commeth~~ die both happily and comfortably. Some Men die neither happily, nor comfortably; and such is the case of all who die out of Christ; they die in their sins, they die to be damned for ever. *Some* die happily, but not comfortably; such is the case of poor Christians dying under desertion, whose Sun sets in a Cloud; they die in the dark, not knowing what shall become of their Souls to Eternity, which yet go safe to Heaven, being built upon the Rock of Ages; the Lord Jesus Christ. Some die both happily and comfortably; such is the case of all those who have all things set right between God and them, all things ready, and in order, before a dying hour comes. ~~Some~~ die presumptuously, thinking all is right and well in the matters of their Souls, when indeed nothing is so, that is sad for Eternity: The Lord deliver your Souls and mine from such an exit. Some die tremblingly or doubtingly, not knowing how things are with them, whether well or ill, but they fear ill;

34 The Great Concern; or,

that is sad, at least for time; The Lord carry us above such an Exit. Some (viz. well ordered Souls) die ~~happily~~ ^{gloriously}, knowing things to be right between God and them; and that is comfortable both for Time and Eternity. Well then, if hereby we come to have such a glorious Victory over Death and the Grave, it must then be a great attainment to have all things in order between God and us; and consequently greatly our concern to have things so.

2. Hereby ~~we come to have a rich and glorious entrance ministred to us into everlasting Life, and Glory, into Heaven and Blessedness.~~ As hereby ~~we come to be Glorious Conquerours over our natural Death; so hereby we come to have a Rich and Glorious entrance ministred to us into the Eternal Life.~~ Which also carries much sweetness and blessedness in it, 2 Pet. 1. 5, 11. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, &c. That is, grow as compleat in Grace as possibly you can, make sure of your Salvation, make all ready in the matters of your Souls: And what then? So an entrance shall be ministred to you abundantly into the Ever-
your calling and election Ever-

afford
us a
better

glorious
eternal
life

hope

as in
Pet!

give
dili
gence
tho
your
calling and election
Ever-

Preparation for Death. 35

everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. ~~And is not this a blessedness of attainment?~~ *Take this in three things.*

1. ~~Hereby~~ the Soul comes to enjoy much of Heaven ~~here~~ upon Earth; much of Blessedness and Glory, whilst on ~~this side~~ *here* Blessedness and Glory; then hath a Man an abundant entrance ministered unto him into Heaven and Glory, when he hath much of Heaven and Glory given out to him here on Earth, large earnest, and First-fruits: And this the Soul has that hath all things right in the matters of his spiritual state, all things ready and in order within. Hence we read sometimes of the Earnest, sometimes of the First-fruits of the Spirit, Ephes. 1. 14. Rom. 8. 28. And the Soul that is ~~most~~ *best* ready, has the greatest Earnest and First-fruits; that is to say, the greatest beginnings of Heaven ~~here~~ upon Earth: For that which makes us ready for a dying-hour, is something of Heaven ~~dropped~~ *come* into the Soul here. *immediately to his soul*

2. Hereby he comes to go triumphantly from Earth to Heaven, ~~to go to~~ Heaven and Glory with a Crown upon his Head; and is not this a sweet attainment? Then hath a Man an abundant entrance.

and it is not a delay of time to depart to

36 *The Great Concern; or,*

~~entrance into Heaven and Glory, when~~
~~he goes triumphingly thither: When a~~
~~Man passes to~~ Heaven and Glory with
visions thereof in his eye, and preliba-
tions thereof in his soul; with a clear
witness and evidence in his Spirit, that
he is going to possess the fulness thereof
with God and Christ for ever: ~~When a~~
~~Man~~ enters into Life without any re-
bukes from God, or his own Consci-
ence; without any stumbling through
doubting or unbelief: This is the happi-
ness of such as have all things well in
their souls, before a dying hour comes.
It is with such in death; as it was with
John in a Vision, Rev. 4. 1. They, as it
were, *bear a Voice from Heaven, saying,*
Come up hither; and immediately they are
in the Spirit. Some poor souls croud in-
to Heaven, through a throng of doubts
and unbelief, difficulties and desponden-
cies, through many fears and temptati-
ons; insomuch that it might be truly
said of them, that they are *scarcely sa-*
ved, as the Apostle's expression is: but
others go through none of these; they
go triumphantly with a Crown upon
their Heads as it were. So Paul, 2 Tim.
4. 6, 7, 8. *I am now ready to be offered;*
and

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and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not unto me only, but to all them also that love his appearing. ~~Methinks I see how this holy Soul went triumphingly to the Throne of God, and the Lamb.~~ When David and the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord, it was with shouting, and with the sound of the Trumpet: So when such a Soul goes to rest, 'tis with a kind of shouting and triumph, among the Saints themselves, who all reach the same Heaven and Glory ~~as I.~~ There is a ~~very~~ great deal of difference in their Death, and in their going to the Heaven and Glory. As (you know) two Ships may arrive at the same Harbour, yet with much difference, as to the manner of their coming in: The one ~~comes in~~ ^{comes in} ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ ~~her~~ ⁱⁿ ~~anchors~~ ⁱⁿ ~~lost,~~ ⁱⁿ ~~her~~ ⁱⁿ ~~Sails~~ ⁱⁿ ~~torn~~ ⁱⁿ ~~and~~ ⁱⁿ ~~rent,~~ ⁱⁿ ~~her~~ ⁱⁿ ~~Flags~~ ⁱⁿ ~~down,~~ ⁱⁿ ~~her~~ ⁱⁿ ~~Masts~~ ⁱⁿ ~~broken,~~ ⁱⁿ ~~and~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ⁱⁿ ~~like:~~ ⁱⁿ But the other comes in bravely, riding as 'twere in triumph, with her Sails spread, her Anchors safe, her
Flags

How 38 The Great Concern; or,
pleasing flags flying, her Trumpets sounding, and
men to her Mariners shouting. So great a differ-
ence rence there is in the passing of Saints to
with Heaven and Blessedness: Now ~~what an~~
lay ~~attainment must it be to go with shout-~~
~~ing and Triumph?~~

3. Hereby the Soul comes to be ad-
mitted to, and invested with an eminent
fulness of Blessedness and Glory with
God for ever: ~~Then has a Man an abun-~~
~~dant entrance into Heaven and Glory,~~
when he is admitted to, and invested
with an eminent fulness of Glory and
Blessedness in Heaven for ever, and this
he hath, who has all right and ready in
the Concerns of his Soul, when he comes
to die: Such a one receives a full reward,
as the expression is, 2 Epist. John 8. and
has much Fruit abounding to his account,
Phil. 4.7. And Oh what a sweet and
blessed attainment does this speak it to be,
to have all in order against a dying hour
comes? Now if it be such an attainment
to have things set right, and in order in
our Souls against a dying hour, then
surely it must needs be highly our Con-
cern to have all things so.

as one man differeth
from another CHAR.
glory

C H A P. IV.

Which shews the state of Men and Women under Death, as a farther evidence of our assertion.

AS to have all things ready, and in order, when a dying hour comes, is an high and glorious attainment, ^{It may be sayed from} ~~such is the state and condition of Men and Women under Death, that it cannot but~~ ^{is of the} be highly their Concern to have all things ^{Count int} set right, all things ready in the matters ^{of the} of ~~their~~ Souls, when ~~they~~ ^{we} come to die. ^{which} ~~This I will set before you in three Propositions.~~ ^{will be moved}

First Proposition is this: ~~That such is the state and condition of Men and Women under Death, that there is no return for them into this life any more for ever.~~ ^{more} ~~V~~ When once a ~~Man's~~ ^{our} Sun is set, it never rises ^{will} more: When once a ~~Man~~ ^{we are} has his Exit, is gone off the Stage of this World, ^{we shall} ~~he~~ never enter more; ~~there is no more any Part to be acted here by him.~~ This you have in the Text: Before I go hence, and be no more; that is, no more in this ~~V~~ World. So

40 .The Great Concern ; or,

So Job 7. 7, 8, 9, 10. O remember, that my Life is wind, mine Eyes shall no more see Good : The Eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more : Thine Eyes are upon me, and I am not. As the Cloud is consumed and vanisheth away ; so he that goeth down to the Grave, shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his House, and his place shall know him no more. Again, Job 10. 20, 21. Are not my Dayes few ? Cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little ; before I go, whence I shall not return, even into the Land of darkness, and the shadow of Death. And again, Chron. 16. 22. When a few days are come, then shall I go the way whence I shall not return. All shewing, that when a Man is once gone off the Stage of this World, ~~there is no return for him any more.~~ ^{he can no more return}

Second Proposition is this ; ~~That~~ ^{such is the state of Men and Women under} ~~such is the state of Men and Women under~~ ^{hopefulness of doing any thing} ~~Death, that there is nothing to be done for~~ ^{after} ~~their Soules ; there is nothing to be mended,~~ ^{what is a miss, nothing to be set in order,} ~~what shall be found out of order.~~ ^{what shall} ~~Death (my Beloved)~~ ^{may} ~~is not the time of working,~~ ^{be found out of order.} ~~but of receiving the reward of our~~ ^{work 1}

Preparation for Death. 41

that work: Death leaves us under an utter
all no and eternal impossibility of ever doing
bath any thing for another World: There-
thine fore *whatever thine hand findeth to do*
As (saith Solomon) *do it with all thy might;*
b a- *for there is no work nor Counsel in the*
ave, Grave, *whither thou goest, Eccles. 9. 10.*
turn And, I must work the Works of him that
shall sent me, *while it is day; because the night*
20, *cometh, when no Man can work, saith*
en, Christ, John 9. 4. Death is a state of
m- darkness, and it deprives us of all helps,
all advantages, and opportunities, ~~of ever~~
k- ~~doing any thing for the good of our~~
a- Souls: There is no repenting, no be-
re lieving, no turning to God in the
all Grave: There is no ~~obtaining~~ Pardon
of Sin; no getting an Interest in
s Christ; no making our Calling and
T Election sure there: O no! these things
must be done now, or they can never
~~be done~~; and if they be never done, our
Souls are for ever undone. ~~Twas an~~
Epicurean saying of him, who said, *Eat,*
~~drink, play; for after Death there is no~~
~~pleasure:~~ but it would be a Christian
~~saying, to say to you, and my own Soul,~~
Love God, Pray to him, seek his Face,
Repent, Believe, make sure of Christ now

¶ Just as the tree is for

42 The Great Concern; or

for after Death none of these are to be done: They must be done ~~here~~ ^{now}, or never. *

Third Proposition is this, ^{The soul at} That such is the state of Men and Women under Death ~~that the Soul is actually and irreversibly~~ ^{stated and concluded in its Eternal condition;} ~~The Souls Eternal state is absolutely fix'd, and unchangeably determined, without any alteration for ever.~~ ^{unalterably} It is an Observation among the School-Men, that look what befalls the Angels that sinned, that in Death befalls wicked Men, those that are not ready for a dying hour: ^{when} The Angels immediately upon their sinning, ^{irreversibly placed} were ~~placed~~ in an irreversible condition of Wo and Misery; And ^{at} wicked Men, ^{immediately} ~~unready~~ ^{immediately} ~~upon~~ ^{placed} Death, are irreversibly ~~placed~~ in a like Eternal condition; they ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~Eternally~~ ^{eternally} sealed up under Damnation: And the Devils may as soon ^{escape from} ~~get out of~~ those Chains of Eternal Darkness, whereinto they are cast, and in which they are locked up, being reserved unto Judgment; as such Persons can change, or reverse that condition. ~~The truth is,~~ Death, when ever, or where ever it comes, is a determining thing, ~~it concludes~~ ^{the}

the result of which is life

Preparation for Death. 43

the Soul for ever under an unalterable state of life or death, of happiness or misery; ^{for ever} ~~for as the Tree falls, so it lies~~, Eccles. 11. 3. Hence in Death, the Spirit, the Soul is said, ~~to return to God~~, Eccles. 12. 7. Upon which a Learned Man has this observation; God (saith he) receives the Soul of Man, when he dies to himself; and having received it, he delivers it either to the Holy Angels, that by them it might be carried to Heaven, if it hath been holy and good; or he delivers it to the evil Angels, by them to be dragged into Hell, if it hath been ungodly. ~~Hence the Apostle tells us, after Death comes Judgment~~, Heb. 9. 27. By which is meant the particular Judgment of every Man and Woman immediately upon Death; which is nothing else but the ^{in the presence of} ~~stating~~ of the Soul in an Eternal condition. Hence also, when Dives is brought in, desiring that Lazarus might dip the tip of his Finger in Water to cool his Tongue; Answer is made, That it cannot be, ~~for as much as there is no going for any~~, either from Hell to Heaven, or from Heaven to Hell, because there is a Gulf fixed, Luke 16. 26. Noting the unalterableness of that state which Death sets Men down in, whether

44 *The Great Concern; or*

and proving the great importance of having our souls habitually prepared for the hour of death
 whether of Happiness or Misery. Well then, if such be the state of Men and Women under Death, as we have heard then surely 'tis highly our concernment to have all ready; all in order against a dying hour comes. Having given you thus briefly the demonstration of the Point, I shall make some practical improvement of it. *John Alford*

C H A P. V.

Wherein Sinners are convinced of their Sin and Folly in their neglect of this Concern: with six weighty Pleas or Arguments, to set home this Conviction, and awaken them to their work.

Preparation for death

ANd is this ~~indeed~~ a Concern of so much weight and moment ~~to us~~? Then how great is their folly, and what enemies are they to their own Souls, who live in the neglect of ~~this great Business and Concern~~? (which the most of ~~Mendo~~.) God is pleased to spare, ~~yea~~ wonderfully to spare them for Days, for Weeks, for Months, for Years together, and

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Well and that for this very end, that they
Wo should ^{make} ~~make~~ themselves ready, and
eard ~~set all right in the matters of their~~
nen Souls, against a dying hour comes: *how you*
ist But wo, and alas for them! ~~This they~~ *is their*
you mind not, this they concern not them- *folly*
the selves about, but do live in a total
im neglect thereof; ~~than which what~~
greater folly can they be guilty of?
Pray mind what God himself speaks
in this case, Deut. 32. 28, 29. Where *92*
~~he~~ saith concerning Israel, They were
a Nation void of Counsel, nor was there
any understanding in them: And what
then? O that they were wise, that they
understood this; that they would consider
their latter end. Observe here two things
attested and verified by God himself.
(First) that 'tis a point of the highest
Wisdom the Sons of Men are capable
of, seriously to consider their latter
end; that is, to prepare for Death,
to ~~set all things right in the matters~~
of their Souls, ~~so as~~ that things may
issue well with them at last, and they
may go off the Stage of this World *in peace*
~~with~~ comfort. (Secondly) That not
to do this, is a ^{most} ~~point~~ of the greatest
folly: It doth evidently argue Men to
be

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be void of ~~Conscience~~ and all true understanding : it would have been their wisdom to have considered their latter end ; and their not doing of it, argued them to be guilty of notorious folly : ~~These things, you may see, God himself attests and verifies here. And, my Beloved, what greater folly can there be, than for a Man to live in the neglect of that which is of so much weight and importance for him to mind, as this is ? Surely the greater the concern is, the greater must ^{their} folly be in the neglect thereof :~~ Yet this is the folly that the most of Men are guilty of ; they mind not their latter end, ~~their~~ dying hour ; (at least not so, as to make a timely provision for it.) God lets them live many years, and perhaps ~~they~~ rejoyce in them all ; but they forget the days of darkness, which are many : ^{as appears} They regard not the state of their Souls, nor how things stand between God and them, in reference to another World : And O ! that this were not the folly of too many of us, who profess the belief of another life, a future state : *We live and enjoy good, but we put far from us the evil day, as those*
are

They think not of it

or

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re-said to do, *Amos* 6. 3. God spares us
 the after time; but no provision ~~do we~~ *is made*
 make for a dying hour. ~~O how many~~
~~of us have never yet set any thing right~~
~~in the matters of our Souls, any thing~~
~~in order against the time comes, when~~
 we are to go hence, and be no more; *we shall*
 that have scarce ever had yet one serious
 thought of Death, Judgment, or Eter-
 nity, nor made the least tittle of provisi-
 on for them? And what shall I say to
 such? I would (if God saw good) awa-
 ken them out of their folly, and con-
 vince them of it: in order to which, I
 would plead a little with them in five
 or six particulars.

1. Must we not all go hence? ~~Solo-~~
~~mon tells us, There is a time to be born, and~~
~~a time to die, Eccles. 3. 2. And the one~~
~~is as sure as the other; as sure as we~~
~~have had a time to be born, so sure we~~
~~shall have a time to die; and the living~~
~~know it: The living know that they shall~~
~~die, (saith Solomon). Eccles. 9. 5. In-~~
~~deed they may well know it: For not~~
~~only the experience of between five and~~
~~six thousand years tells them so; but it~~
~~is what is appointed, what is infallibly~~
 determined by the unchangeable Law,
 and

None are exempt from
the
most
dear
Both
are
mutually
Certain
unalter-
ably

no age, no condition can
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and Degree of Heaven, Heb. 9. 27. no
can any thing whatever exempt us from
the stroke of Death.

1. Youthful strength and vigour can
do it: for young Men die, as well as
old; strong Men die, as well as weak.
One dieth in his full strength, (saith the
Holy Ghost) being wholly at ease and quiet,
his Breasts are full of Milk, and his
Bones are moistened with Marrow, Job. 21.
23, 24.

2. Worldly pomp and greatness can't
do it: For great Men die, as well as
mean Men; Rich Men die as well as poor
Men. Where is the House of the Prince?
(saith the Holy Ghost.) Answer is made,
He shall be brought to the Grave, and shall
remain in the Tomb, the clods of the Valley
shall be sweet unto him, and every Man shall
draw after him, as there is innumerable
before him, Job. 21. 28, 32, 33. So in the
49 Psalm, 16, 17, 18, 19. Be not thou afraid,
when one is made rich, when the Glory of
his House is increased: For when he dieth,
he shall carry nothing away, his Glory shall
not descend after him; though while he li-
ved, he blessed his Soul, and the like; he
shall go to the Generation of his Fathers, he
shall never see light.

3. Humane

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3. Human Wisdom and Policy can't do it; for wise Men die, as well as Fools. *are vain*
So Psal. 49. 10. *Wise Men die; likewise the Fool; yea, in many respects, Wise Men die as the Fool,* Eccles. 2. 16. Pray what ~~is~~ become of all the wise Men, and great Politicians that have lived in former Ages? Truly the clods of the Valley cover them.

4. Spiritual gifts and graces can't do it: For good men die, as well as bad; holy Men, as well as wicked men: *are* The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, Isa. 57. 1. *are*

5. Eminency of place and service can't do it. Your Fathers, where are they? And the Prophets, do they live for ever? Zach. *are*

1. 5. What higher place, than to be a Prophet, to be an Ambassadour for God? and yet such die. Nothing ~~(you see)~~ *are*

can exempt us from death's strokes: Why then should we neglect to prepare for it?

I will close this Head with a saying I have read in one of the Ancients; *are* What among humane affairs, saith he, is more certain than Death? What more uncertain than the hour of Death? Death compassions not poverty, it reverences not either the

D

great-

50 *The Great Concern; or,*

greatness, it spares no Sex, no Manners, no Age; only it seems to come in at the gate upon old Men; but craftily it steals in upon young ones.

*2. Does not death hasten upon us all? As we must all die, so death hastens apace upon us: Every step we take is a step towards death and the grave: So we find, Eccles. 9. 10. Our whole life is (as one well observes upon that place) nothing else, but a journey towards Death and the Grave; whether we sleep or wake, eat or drink, trade or travel, pray or play, we are still hastening to the Grave; A dying hour hastens upon us all; ~~and how fast (pray) does it hasten upon us?~~ Faster than a Weavers Shuttle does to the end of the Web. *My days (saith Job) are swifter than a Weavers Shuttle, Job 7. 6. How fast does it hasten upon us? As fast, yea faster than a Post hastens to the end of his Stage, or a swift Ship to the Harbour, under the advantage of Wind and Tide, or the swift flying Eagle to the prey. My days are swifter than a Post (saith Job) they flee away, they see no good: They are passed away, as the swift Ships; as the Eagle hasteneth to the prey, Job 9. 25, 26.*
How*

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How fast does it hasten upon us? So fast, as that for ought we know, it will be upon us, before we see the light of another day. *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee,* Luke 10. 20.

How fast does it hasten upon us? So fast, as that for ought we know, it may *come* be upon us the next hour, yea the next moment: *They spend their days in mirth, and in a moment go down to the grave,*

Job 21. 13. *To be sure it will be up-^{certainly}on us speedily, and it may be up-^{undately}suddenly.* ~~Imag~~ consider, what are ~~we~~ and what is our life? Wind: Job

7. 7. *O remember, that my life is wind.*

An hands breadth, Psalm 39. 5. Behold thou hast made my days as an hands-breadth; mine Age is as nothing before thee: A declining shadow, Psal. 102. 11.

My days are like a shadow that inclineth, and I am withered like Grass: A Flower of the Field which is withered, and gone with the Wind: As for man, his days are as Grass, as a Flower of the Field, the Wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof knoweth it no more, Psal. 103. 15, 16. And again, *All Flesh is Grass, and the goodliness thereof as the Flower of the Field, the Grass withereth, the*

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Flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: Surely the people are as grass, Isa. 40. 6, 7. Vanity, and a shadow. Man is like to Vanity, his days are as a shadow that passeth away, Psalm 144. 4. A vapour which appeareth for a little season, and is gone, James 4. 14. O how soon may one, or another, or all of us, be among the dead? How soon may Death approach us?

3. What infinite mercy is it, that God has spared us thus long, and ~~still does spare us to set all things right, to make all ready for a dying hour?~~ *O (my Beloved)* how great is the sparing mercy of God towards us? We have had some ten, ~~some~~ twenty, ~~some~~ thirty, some forty, ~~some~~ fifty, ~~some~~ sixty years in the World; and still God spares us; still he lets us live, and enjoy good: And why all this (think you)? Surely to set things right in our Souls, to make ready for a dying hour: and shall we yet neglect? God forbid. *O Sirs,* think a little, I beseech you, with your selves; How long since the Grave might have swallowed us up, and the Bottomless Pit have ~~put~~ its mouth upon us? How long since might time and days have been at an end

a dying hour

Lord

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f the end with us, and our Souls ~~fixed~~ in a
ple miserable Eternity? *But* still God spares
ow us, ~~and~~ we are yet in the Land of the
as a Living, with a door of Mercy and Grace
4. 4 ~~yet~~ open unto us; at least a possibility
sea ~~left~~ us of knowing the things of our *everday*
oon peace in our day, of making provision
be for Death and Eternity: And ~~Quoth~~ *to say*
eath mercy is this! I would fain a little *also in*
quicken both you and my self by ~~this~~ *our own*
God consideration: And in order thereunto, *by just*
oes let me plead a little particularly with *eternal*
ake you: *of this mercy let us receive*

1. Consider how long God hath
spared, ~~and does spare you~~; beyond what
he does, and has, thousands, and ten
thousands of others: God does not spare
all at that rate, which he has spared, ~~and~~
does still spare us: Alas! how many
thousands are there now ~~free~~ among the
Dead, who came into being long since
we did? Their Glass is run, their Sun is
set, their Day is over, their Hopes and
expectations are ~~all at an end~~, their Souls
are ~~fixed~~ in an Eternal condition, a con-
dition that will admit of neither change
nor period for ever; and yet we are
spared still: They came into the World
long after us, and are gone into Eterni-

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ty long before us : Yea, how many are there, that never arrived to the one half of those years that we have arrived unto? their Sun has set in the morning : How many of us have out-lived our Yoke-fellows, our Children, our Servants, our Friends, and Acquaintance? And yet we stand our ground : and all this that we might prepare for a dying hour : *This patience of God should lead us to repentance, Rom. 2. 5. And O that it might so do!*

2. Consider how much we have provoked God, ~~and what advantage we have given him in Justice against us~~ : I would say here, as Christ speaks in another case, *Luk. 13. 2. Suppose ye that those Galileans (whose blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices) were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish : Or those eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloah fell, and sl. w them, think ye they were sinners above all the Men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* So say I here, suppose ye, that those that are gone down to the gates of the Grave, and
the

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the bars of death, before us, were greater sinners than we? I tell you, nays *but* except we repent, we must all likewise perish. We have sinned as well as they, and possibly, in many regards, more than they: ~~To be sure~~, we have all over and over deserved long since to have been covered with the shadow of the Night of eternal darkness. O how has the patience of God been tried, and his long-sufferings put to it by us! What a burden have we been to his Soul! Some of us have cause to think, that we have been as great a burden to God, as most that ever lived: How justly may the blessed God complain of many of us, *That we have made him to serve with our sins, and wearied him with our iniquities*, as he did of them of old? *Isa. 43, 24.* *That we have broke his heart with our whorish heart, whereby we have departed from him*, *Ezek. 6. 9.* *That our sins have pressed him down, as a Cart is pressed that is full of Sheaves*, *Amos 2. 13.* Alas! Alas! How have we wallowed in our pollutions, and acted out the enmity and rebellion of our natures against him! How have we rejected his Word, resisted his Spirit, despised his Grace, trampled upon his Son,

56 *The Great Concern; or,*

refused many and many an offer of Love and many a sweet Call, and a blessed Invitation, to come to the Marriage-supper of the Lamb? And yet that he should still spare us: O what mercy is this! In 1 Pet. 3. 20; we read, that *the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah*: And truly, my Beloved, it waits as much in our days, our provocations being as many, and as high against him, as theirs of that Generation where. **O Sirs**, why are we not in Hell? Why are we not sealed and shut up among the Damned? Why have we one Call more, one offer more, one season of Grace more? Verily 'tis all rich Mercy: **O** that it might lead us to Repentance.

3. Consider how sad it had been with us, ~~had the Lord taken that advantage against us, which we have over and over given him.~~ Suppose (my Beloved) God had not spared us, ~~but~~ had cut us off, as he might long since, what now had been become of us? ~~And where now had we been?~~ Had you died of such and such a sickness you have been in, when possibly a sentence of Death was passed upon you, both by your selves and others, and there was really but a
step

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Step between Death and you; where and how miserable had you now been? Had you not been now in the flames, eternally separated from God and Christ? being Godless and Christless: Have you not now cause to fear you had been in as irrecoverable a condition, as the Devils themselves are in, sealed up under wrath and condemnation, past all hopes and possibility of mercy for ever? *Whither had I gone* (saith *Austin*) *if then* (speaking of the time that he was in his sins) *I had gone hence? Whither had I gone, but into the flames, and into eternal torments, answerable to my sins?* May not we say the like? But blessed be God, it is yet time and season with me and you; we are spared to this hour, that we might provide for Death and Eternity. *O Sirs,* suppose you or I were now among the Damned; suppose we were, as they are, sealed up under Wrath, and separated from God, left under an utter impossibility of ever seeing his face; how sad then would our condition be? *Why,* thus it might have been with us! *O* what mercy is it then that God has spared us, and doth spare us as he does? And how should it awaken us to our work?

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4. Consider, how much more sad ~~we~~ may, and will yet be with us, in case we ~~provide not for a dying hour.~~ Truly, all the longer God spares us, if we answer ~~not his end in his sparing mercy,~~ the more miserable shall we be for ever. ~~It will be sad to perish at all;~~ but it will be doubly sad to perish under the long suffering of God, under the abuse of much goodness, and long patience. O to have many days, and many years patience and goodness ~~come in~~ to witness against a man at last, how sad will this be! Think of, and seriously lay to heart that Scripture, Rom. 2. 4, 5. *Despise thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but after thy hardness, and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thy self wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.* Every day which God in his patience affords us, if we be not led to Repentance, is a day of treasuring up wrath, heaping up ~~to our selves~~ wrath against the day of wrath, when wrath shall come upon us to the uttermost. Well, think then what a mercy it is, that God spares you

as

as he does; and what an obligation this
showing mercy of his is upon you, to set
all things right in the matters of your
souls against a dying hour comes.

4. ~~Are you sure that those helps and~~
~~advantages which now you enjoy, to fur-~~
~~ther you in your work, will always last~~
~~and be enjoyed by you. Suppose (my Be-~~
~~loved) that God should yet spare you,~~
~~and prolong your days in the Land of~~
~~the Living: Yet, O how soon may all~~
~~your helps and advantages, to further~~
~~you in this great Work, be withdrawn~~
~~from you! Now, blessed be God, you~~
~~enjoy many blessed helps and advantages~~
~~for your furtherance in this great Work;~~
~~but how quickly may they all be gone?~~

I. How soon may the Reproofs, the
Counsels, the Holy Examples of your
godly Friends, Ministers, and Relations,
be withdrawn from you? Now you en-
joy the loving Reproofs, the wholesome
Counsel, the Holy Examples of such
and such Friends and Relations; one re-
proves you for Sin, another quickens
you to Duty: one dehorts you from the
World, and carnal pleasure; another
perswades you to close with Christ, and
walk with God, to pursue after Hea-
ven,

ven and Eternal life; one woos and beseeches you, another charges and commands you to labour and know God, and to live to him, to provide for another life; and they all shew you the path of Life; they tread the way to Heaven in your sight: All which are great helps and advantages to further you in this Great Concern of yours: But how soon may all these be withdrawn? Thy Friends, thy Ministers, thy Relations will speedily be lodged in in the dust, and thou shalt never have a word of Reproof, a word of Counsel, a word of Quickning, a word of Encouragement, or a pattern of Faith and Holiness set before thee, by them any more for ever, which would be a dreadful thing. Now thy Godly Father, Mother, Yoke-fellow, Master, Friend, and Acquaintance, is plying thee with Counsels and Instructions, for the good of thy Soul; to morrow, it may be, he or she goes down to the Gates of the Grave; and then no more of this for ever.

2. How soon may the Word and Ordinances of God, which you now enjoy, be withdrawn from you? Now you enjoy the Word and Ordinances of God; you go from Ordinance to Ordinance;

you

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you have *line upon line, precept upon precept*, as it is *Isa. 28. 10.* ~~Yea, let me tell you,~~ *You see and hear these things, which many Prophets and righteous men have desired to see, and hear, but saw, and heard them not, Matth. 13. 16.* O how is *Light and Immortality brought to light to you?* How is the *Way of Salvation* made plain and manifest before you? What glorious Discoveries? what blessed Revelations? what sweet and frequent tenders of Christ are made to you? How freely are you called to the *Marriage-supper of the Lamb?* How lovingly does Christ invite you to himself? How kindly does he stand knocking at the Door of your Souls? ~~Q (my Beloved)~~ I may now say to you, as *Paul to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 6. 2.* *Behold! Now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation.* Q what helps and advantages are these? But how soon may they all be gone? How soon may the Word of God be withdrawn? How soon may your light be put out, and your Souls left in darkness, not knowing whither to go? Remember that Word of Christ, and lay it to heart, *John 12. 35.* *Let a little while is the Light with you; walk while ye have the*

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the light ; lest darkness come upon you ; and he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the Children of the light. It is a great question, whether we may not lose Gospel Ordinances and all ; and where are we then ?

3. How soon may the motions and strivings of the Spirit of God be withdrawn from you ? Now you have the motions and strivings of the Spirit of God in you, and with you ; *he moves upon the face of the water* in your souls ; he moves and strives in and by the Word, and Ordinances ; Mercies, and afflictions ; now you have enlightning, and then you have quickening influences from him ; now he shews you your work, and then he tenders you his assistance ; now he discovers the odiousness of Sin to you, and then he displays the beauty, sweetness, and excellency of Christ and Holiness before you ; But alas ! How soon may all this be at an end ? Think of that terrible word, Gen. 6.3. *My Spirit shall not always strive with man.* God may possibly the next day, yea the next hour, say to his Spirit concerning one or another of

us,

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us, Let him alone, strive no more with him, move no more in him, convince him no more, perswade him no more, draw and allure him no more; he is addicted to his lusts, and to this World, let him alone; he has no mind to Heaven, no desire to make any provision for another World, let him alone; he is unwilling to see beyond time to eternity; he is given to his carnal pleasures, let him alone; he has a resisting, gain-saying Spirit, let him alone. Q how soon these, and all other helps and advantages, you now enjoy, may be withdrawn, who knows? You have all these together in one Scripture, which I desire you to lay to Heart, Luke 19. 41, 42. *When he was come near he beheld the City (speaking of Jerusalem) and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine Eyes. They had had a day, they did enjoy the things of their peace; they might and should have improved their day, and the things of their peace, by securing their eternal state: But they neglected it, and now all these are withdrawn from them; which caused the Lord of Glo-*

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ry, the Joy of the whole Earth, to weep over them ; so woful, miserable, and deplorable he saw their condition to be : and how sad will it be with you, if once Christ should come to say over you that dismal Word, *Now they are hid from your eyes.*

5. Is it an easie matter (~~think you~~) to set things right in your Souls, and to make all things ready for a dying hour ? Suppose (~~my Beloved~~) that you should live yet many days ; and withal, your helps and advantages for the good of your souls should be continued to you : yet, is it an easie work which you have to do ? and shall you have time and days to spare ? Believe it, Sirs, all will be little enough to set things right, to make things ready for a dying hour. Pray consider with me these few things, as to this.

1. Consider in what a woful disorder all things are at present with you, and how utterly unready for a dying hour : I will give you the Scripture-state of your case ; You are *dead in trespasses and sins*, under whole loads and Mountains of Scarlet, Crimson Guilt ; *without Christ, without hope, without God in the World, alienated, and enemies in your minds*.

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*minds, by wicked works; yea, enmity it
self against God and Christ; full of sin
both within and without, and nothing
but sin, having no good dwelling in
you; void of all Grace, all true Spirit-
tual life; under the power and predom-
inancy of Lust; serving divers Lusts
and Pleasures, and carried Captive by
the Devil at his will: Closely glued to,
and deeply in love with this World:
ignorant of God, and of the great
Myserie of the Father, and of Christ;
at least having no saving knowledg
of them: No favour of Heaven, no
relish of Spiritual things in your Souls:
~~wallowing in your blood and gore,~~
~~being filthy and abominable, to every~~
~~good work reprobate:~~ the heart strong-
ly averse from God, and all Good, and
vigorously bent to Sin and Vanity:
Nothing of Heaven within; but full of
Hell, ~~full of the Spirit and Image of~~
~~the Devil;~~ under the Law of Sin;
strangers to the Law of Grace; no Uni-
on with Christ; no Oil in the Vessel;
poor, miserable, blind, and naked; at most
having but the form, and denying the
power of Godliness. This is your condi-
tion: O what disorders are these! And
what*

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what an unready posture are you in for Death and Eternity ?

2. Consider how great a thing it is to be ready for Death, ~~ready indeed and to have all things set right, and in order, against a dying hour comes :~~ and how much is requisite in order thereunto. 'Tis a great saying of an holy Man : No one (saith he) can joyfully welcome Death, but he that has been long composing his Spirit, and making ready for it. ~~Oh my (beloved)~~ to be indeed ready to quit the World, to go into the Divine Presence, the great, the holy, glorious presence of God, to be ready to enter upon the Beatifical Vision, to possess a Mansion in the Father's House, *an* to joyn with ~~the~~ Heavenly Host of Angels, and Spirits of just men made perfect, in eternal praising, admiring, and adoring of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : Believe it, this is a great thing, and great things are requisite thereunto : This calls for a near Union with Christ, a firm peace with God, clear Evidences for Heaven ; *o/y* for much Grace and Holiness, much Heavenliness and Spirituality of Mind, much weanedness from this World, much holy deadness

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to Sin, Self, and the Creature; much Victory over Corruption; much Soul-cleansing; much purity of Heart and Affections; much diligence and faithfulness in Duties: And (~~my Beloved~~) are these little things, or things easie to be accomplished and attained unto? ~~O~~ ~~Sirs~~ The Scripture speaking of these things, calls upon us to *strive*, Luke 13. 24. *to give all diligence* in the pursuit of them, 2 Pet. 1. 5, 10. To manage and dispatch them *with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. All which ~~tells us~~, that they are great things, and not easily to be accomplished and attained unto: Therefore we had need look after this, and neglect no longer.

3. Consider, what ~~lets~~ and hindrances, difficulties and oppositions you must expect to meet with ~~in your minding and managing this Work~~; Not only is the Work it self great; ~~but you must also expect many lets and hindrances, much difficulty and opposition in the managing of it~~ You must expect ~~lets and oppositions~~ from the Devil, he is the Enemy of Souls; and you must expect that he will make use of all his wiles, methods, and devices,
all

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all his Craft and Cunning, all his Artifices; and that he will stir up all his wrath and malice against you: he is your Enemy, and he is a subtil Enemy, a potent Enemy, an indefatigable Enemy, an Enemy *that always goes about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. You must expect ~~lets~~ and oppositions from the World ~~too~~; from the Men of the World, from the things of the World, from the smiles of the World, from the frowns of the World. The World is your Enemy, as well as the Devil: So much is intimated, 1 John 5. 4. And you must expect opposition from it: The men of the World will discourage you; the things of the World will divert you; the troubles of the World will mightily depress you; the enjoyments of the World will miserably ensnare and entangle you: The World is of a marvellous bewitching, ensnaring and entangling nature: It is indeed opposite to God, and all Goodness; and so to the whole Interest of our Souls. *The Friendship of the World is enmity to God*, James 1. 4. The World will plead for, and take up your time, your strength, your thoughts. O the hindrance

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Arti- hindrance that the World is to thou-
l his sands, and ten thousands, in the work of
ne is their Souls; truly this ruins Multitudes
emy, for ever: This ruined him, we read of
En- *Matth. 19. 32.* And saith Paul, Demas
bous *batb forsaken us, having embraced this pre-*
. 8. *sent world,* 2 Tim. 4. 10.

You must expect lets and hindran-
ces ~~also~~ from your own hearts; ~~yes,~~
from ~~them~~ above all others: *The heart*
~~(the Holy Ghost tells us)~~ *is deceitful*
above all things, and desperately wick-
ed, Jer. 17. 9. And ~~who of us does~~

~~at all observe it, and the workings of~~ *Now*
~~it, does not find it to be so?~~ *Now* it

will openly oppose you, then it will se-
cretly seduce and ensnare you: Now it

will carry you off, and draw you ~~back~~ *away*
from God and Duty, *Heb. 3. 12.* Then

it will turn you aside to sin and vanity,
Isa. 44. 20. Now it will divert you

from Duty; then it will make you dead
and slothful in Duty: 'Tis indeed whol-

ly set against all that is good; and it
has a thousand ways to hinder you in

your Great Work; and you must ex-
pect that it will do its utmost to hin-

der you. This is a close Enemy, it is
always at hand; there is no end of

its

its opposition, till life it self ends. One of the Ancients (I remember) broke out into a sad exclamation against his own Heart, thus: *My Heart* (saith he) *is a wicked Heart, a vain Heart, a roving and a wandering Heart: My mind is exceedingly light, wonderfully inconstant, a Vagabond and a Fugitive; it changes it self into a thousand shapes, it will, and it will not; 'tis like a Leaf, moved and carried about with the Wind. My vain and importunate Heart hales me now to the Market, and then to the streets and brawlings; now to Feasting, and then to impure Lusts; now the Flesh is inflamed with sordid titillations, then the mind is defiled with filthy cogitations.* And who of us may not make the same complaint? Yea, such is the enmity and opposition of our own Hearts against Heaven, and the things of Heaven, that many times when we most resolve, and set our selves to follow God, and to pursue the work of our Souls, then they set us most back. It was a great speech of that same Father, *This* (sayes he) *is my daily exercise, with my whole strength I bend to thee, and would mount up to God and Heaven; but by how much the more strongly I endeavour to come up*

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On thee, by so much the more powerful I
can cast into the Earth, into my self, and
heaven under my self, captivated to my
he Lusts.

And so 'tis often with us : ~~Let~~ then,
and oppositions must be expected by us
on all hands; and we had need there-
fore the more to ~~be~~ to our work.
Tis true, if you will engage in good
earnest in the work of your Souls, your
helps and encouragements will be grea-
ter, than your ~~Lets~~ and Discourage-
ments; You will have more with you
than against you : You will have God
with you, and Christ with you, and
the Comforter with you, and all the
Graces of the Covenant with you; be
encouraged therefore to set upon Soul-
work. Now lay all these things toge-
ther, and see if it be an easie matter to
make ready for a dying hour; and if it
be not, why should we neglect? Why
should we delay any longer?

6. How terrible will Death be to
you ! And what a dreadful change will
it make with you, in case you still neg-
lect to make ready for it ! Suppose
(my Beloved) you go on in the neglect
of this Great Concern, putting far from
you

*you the evil day ; What (think you) will be the issue of it be ? Will not Death be most terrible to you , when you shall be called to conflict with it ? Will it not make a dreadful change with you ? Surely it will. Death to an unready soul , what will it be ? It will be the period of all his mercies , of all his comforts , of all his hopes : For such an one receives all his good things in this life , before death comes , Luke 16 25. It will be the sending of him to his own place ; the cutting him down as ~~fuel~~ for everlasting burnings : It will be (as a worthy Divine speaks) *The taking up of a Draw-bridg , and the pulling up of the Flood-gates of God's eternal wrath , to let in the deluge of it upon his soul for ever : It will be a change to him ; but what change will it be ? Surely , a very sad one.**

1. A change from Earth to Hell : *And is not this a sad Change ? The wicked shall be turned into Hell , and all that forget God , Psalm 19. 17. And we read of the Rich man (who was unready for death) that being dead he was in Hell , Luke 22. 23.*

2. A change from Light to Darkness :

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ness; and is not that a sad Change? The Holy Ghost speaking of such an one, tells us, *God shall drive him out of light into darkness, and chase him out of the World,* John 18.18. Here wicked Men enjoy the light of Creature-comforts, but God will drive them out of these, into the darkness of Eternal-misery, into *utter darkness*, Matth. 25. 30. into *blackness of darkness*, Jude 13.

3. A change from Pleasure to Pain, from Delight to Torment: a sad change ~~it is~~, from pleasure and delight in Sin, to Pain and Torment for Sin, *Luke 16. 23.* Here the Soul sports himself in the pleasures and delights of Sin, and he thinks he can never have enough; but then there will be an end of all those pleasures and delights, and nothing but pain, torment, and vexation will succeed them.

4. A change from the offers of Grace, to the Revelation of Wrath: *Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the Grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction* (saith the Psalmist) in that 88. *Psal. 11.* True, in 1 Pet. 3. 19, 20. we read of *Christ's preaching by the Spirit to the Spirits in Prison*; that is, to Souls in
E Hell

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Hell: But mark, when was it that he preach'd to them? not when in prison, but in the days of *Noah*, when they lived in the World. There ~~is now~~ an offer of Grace and Love made to Souls in the Grave; while life lasts, the Soul hears the joyful sound; And O the sweet Offers, the gracious Tenders, the loving Invitations, ~~that are made to him~~ of Christ, of Grace, of Eternal Life and Love! O the wooings, the meltings, the entreatings, the allurings of Divine Love to and over the Soul! but when Death comes, farewell all these, farewell all the sweet Offers of Christ, and all the blessed motions of the Spirit; then there's nothing but wrath revealed and wrath shall come on the neglected Soul to the uttermost.

5. A change from fair probabilities to utter impossibilities of Life and Salvation; a sad change still: *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation*; now, and not hereafter, *2 Cor. 6. 2.* Now there is a fair probability for the worst of Sinners to be saved, if they will ~~look after~~ ^{seek} Salvation, and ~~mind their Eternal Concerns~~; Christ is both able and willing to save: To save was the

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the end of his coming into the World, and of all he did and suffered here, 1 Tim. 1. 15. Now they are besought and entreated to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. 5. 19, 20. but when Death comes, *that* changes these fair Probabilities into utter impossibilities of Life and Salvation: Therefore mark, *Now* (~~says the Apostle~~) *is the day of Salvation; that is, now while life lasts, and while the Gospel is preached.* *St*

6. A change from Hope to Despair: ~~a sad change indeed.~~ We read, that *the hope of the Hypocrite shall perish*, Job 8. 13. and that *the expectation of the wicked shall perish*, Prov. 10. 28. ~~Whether Men~~ be open Sinners, or close Hypocrites, their hopes at last shall all fail, and turn into Despair, despair of ever seeing God, or enjoying the least tittle or *lots* of Good for ever.

Thus Death will be terrible to you, and make a dreadful change with you, in case you neglect to make ready for its coming; 'twill affright you as bad as the Hand-writing upon the Wall did that proud King, Dan. 5, 5, 6. *Which made his Countenance change, his Thoughts to trouble him, and the joints of his Loins*

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so be loosed, and his Knees to smite one against another. O when Death comes and thou shalt be found unready, how will thy Countenance change, thy Joins be loosed, thy Thoughts troubled, and thy Heart tremble within thee? In a word, I would say to you as the Prophet spake of old, Isa. 10. 3. What will you do in the day of Visitation, and whither will you flee for help? When Death comes, what will you do? which way will you look? will there be any hope, any help, any refuge for your Souls to flee unto? Alas! there will be none. Wilt thou then run to the Mercies of God, and cry, Lord, Lord? Alas! it will be in vain: he will then say unto you, Depart from me, I know you not, Matth. 25. 11, 12. Wilt thou then labour to get Grace and Pardon? Alas! it will be too late; then the Door will be shut against thee, Matth. 25. 10. Wilt thou then desire others to spare thee some of their Oil? Alas! that will be a vain thing; they will tell thee, they have but enough for themselves, Matth. 25. 9. Wilt thou then plead thy Gifts, Parts, and Services for Christ? Alas! it will be to no purpose, unless thou hast done

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done the main Work; notwithstanding
all thy Gifts and Services, he will send
thee away with the workers of Iniquity,
Matth. 7. 22, 23. Wilt thou call up-
on the Rocks and Mountains to cover
thee, and hide thee from the wrath of
Him that sits upon the Throne? Alas!
it will be in vain, *Rev. 6. latter end.* Oh
Sinner! when thou shalt see thy self
launching out into the Great Ocean of
Eternitie; and God shall, as it were say
to thee by the Mouth of thy own Con-
science; Well now, Time and Days are
at an end with you, and will never
dawn more; what hast thou done for
thy Soul? What provision hast thou
made for another World? Is Christ
thine? Hast thou gotten thy sins par-
doned, and the like? When it shall be
thus (*I say*) what wilt thou then do;
and whither wilt thou then look? How
wilt thou then cry out, Undone, un-
done, I am lost for ever; my Day is
ended, and my Work is still to do! Wo
is me! what a God, a Christ, a Heaven,
a Blessedness, a Glory, have I wilfully
and foolishly lost? Truly thou, and such
as thou, are the only persons whose
death will be truly lamentable. I re-

78 *The Great Concern; or,*

member a saying I have read in one of the Ancients: *They (saith he) are to be bewailed in their Death, whom the Devil drag away to the torments of the Infernal Pit: not they, whom the Holy Angels conduct to the joys of Paradise. They are to be bewailed, who after Death are by the Devils turned into Hell; and not they who by the Angels are placed or set down into Heaven.* O that these things might convince you of your Folly, and awaken your Souls; and that so, as yet to know the things of your peace in your Day, and the time of your Visitation.

CHAP. VI.

Being a Call to all, Good and Bad, Saints and Sinners, to address themselves to the Great Work of making all ready for a Dying-hour.

do not these words
WHAT is the language of all this? ~~Verily it calls aloud upon us all,~~
 Good and Bad, Saints and Sinners, to make it our ~~Great~~ Business to set all things right in the matters of our Souls, and

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and make all ready for a Dying-hour:
And O that we would make this im-
provement of this Great Truth, and of
God's sparing Goodness to us! He spares
us, and why does he spare us, but that
we should set all things right, and
make all things ready. ~~Oh that we~~ *to*
~~would now fall in with the End and de-~~ *in*
~~sign of God herein,~~ making it our *chasing*
great Care and Business in time to pro- *us by*
vide for Eternitie, in Life to make ready
for Death. Some of you, I verily be-
lieve, are about this Work, and the Lord
prosper you in it; ~~You know you were~~
~~born for Eternitie,~~ and you do endea-
vour to live for Eternitie; Your great
Work in time is to make provision for
a blessed Eternitie: Oh happy Souls that
you are! Others of us, and those, by
far, the most (I fear) are utterly negli-
gent in this Business; Death and Eter-
nitie a little minded by us; but we are
in a sleepy, drowfie, secure Spirit,
and such (*methinks*) this Truth speaks
in a language much like to that of the
Ship-Master to *Jonah*, *Jonah* 1. 6. *What*
meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Arife, and call
upon thy God, if ſo be he will think on
us, that we periſh not. So, what mean

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~~you~~; O you sleepy, drowsie, secure Soules; arise, make ready for a dying-hour; set all things right, all things in order in your Spiritual Concernments, lest Death come upon you at unawares, and you be lost for ever: And to such ~~of us~~ I would say, as ~~sometimes~~ God did by the Prophet to *Hezekiah*, Isa. 38. 1. *Set thine House in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.* So say I to you, Set your Hearts in order, your Spiritual Concerns in order; make all even between God and you, for you shall shortly die, and not live; you shall shortly go hence, and be no more: ~~and why should we not all do so?~~ If you ~~be to~~ change your Condition in the World, how careful and solicitous are you to have all things ready, and in order for that change? *And* ~~Why~~ (my Beloved), you are shortly to pass under that Great and last Change, a Change ~~from Time for~~ Eternitie; and will you have no care, no solicitude to make ready for that Change? If you are to take a Journey, though but a few Miles, or to make a Voyage into a strange Land; Oh how are you concerned to have all things ready, all things in a prepared posture, in order there-

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thereunto? And (~~my Beloved~~) should not you be more concerned to make ready for your great Journey, your last and great Voyage? You are making a Journey, a Voyage out of Time into Eternitie; You are just launching forth into the Great Ocean: ~~And what, nothing in order, nothing ready, nothing set right in order thereunto? That is strange.~~ If you have some great Business, a Business of more than ordinary importance to be done; or a Suit at Law to be tryed and determined, O how close do you follow it? and how careful are you to have all things ready in order thereunto? And (~~my Beloved~~) should you not be as careful and diligent to prepare, and set all things right for the great Business of your Souls in another World? Have you any Business, any Concern of greater importance to you, than the Concern of your Souls, and Eternitie? If you are to appear before some Earthly Judg, especially if it be about a matter that concerns your Life, Oh how thoughtful are you to have all things ready, and in order, in reference thereunto? And (~~my Beloved~~) should not you be as thoughtful

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and sollicitous to make all ready, and to set all right, in order to your appearing before the Judge of all the Earth; and that about a matter which concerns the life of your Souls, about a matter of Eternal Life or Death. ~~Well, what shall I say? Will you see about this Great Business, this Great Concern~~ or is it all one with you, whether you live or die; are saved, or damned to Eternitie? God yet spares you, blessed be his Name; Will you not set all right, before you go hence and be no more? Sinners, ~~will you set about this Great Business?~~ Your Work is wholly yet to do; though, it may be, your Day is far spent, your Glass is almost run, your Sun near setting, and all your Work to do. Oh 'tis high time for you ~~to awake out of sleep;~~ unless you mean to sleep the sleep of Eternal Death. Saints, ~~will you set about this Great Business, while God spares you?~~ You have done somewhat, but there is ~~much more yet to be done;~~ there is much out of order yet in your Souls: Grace weak, (it may be) Corruption strong, Peace broken, Evidences blurr'd and blotted: Unbelief powerful within you,

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and you, the Heart much estranged from God; little suitableness to Heaven in your Spirits, and the like; Will you now labour to recover strength? How many of us may complain, as that holy Man (St. Bernard) once did? *I am ashamed to live, because I am so unprofitable; and I am afraid to die, because I am so unprepared.* Surely, this Truth concerns the best of us all: and if we understand ourselves, we cannot but know it; the Lord help us to know it effectually. And if after all, you would indeed address to this great Work and Business, then I have several great and weighty Directions to propound to you for your help therein, of which, some more general, some more particular; and I would speak of each distinctly.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Wherein are propounded several General Directions, in order to a thorough preparation of Soul for a Dying hour.

I. **W**ould you indeed set all things right in your Souls, make all ready for a Dying-hour? then in your most prosperous and flourishing state here, maintain a frequent and serious Remembrance of Death and the Grave upon your Spirits. *If a man live many years (saith Solomon), and rejoyce in them all; yet let him remember the days of Darknes, for they are many, Eccles. 11. 8.* By the Days of darknes here, we are to understand Death, and the state of Death; the abode of our Bodies in the Grave, which is a *Land of darknes, and where the Light is as Darknes, Job 10. 20.* Now, saith he, though a Man live many Years, and rejoyce in them all; that is, *Though a Man live long and prosperously, long and joyfully; yet let him remember Death, and the Grave, the future state.* 'Tis true, there are other days of darknes, which we are

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are subject to in this World, and should be remembered by us: Days of outward darkness, the darkness of outward Trouble and Affliction; and days of inward darkness, the darkness of Spiritual distress and dereliction: and indeed 'tis of marvellous use to us in our prosperity to remember these Days of darkness; but especially we should remember Death and the Grave; We should carry a lively Remembrance of these dayes of darkness daily upon us; and indeed our Not-remembering these dayes of darkness, is one great cause why we are so unready for Death, and the Grave, as we are. When we are in the midst of our Enjoyments, and the streams run pleasantly about us, we are too apt to forget these dayes of darkness; we are so taken with our Earthly Comforts, that we are loth to think of Death and Eternitie, *putting far from us the evil Day*; as those in their Enjoyments did, *Amos 6. 3.* And therefore, when these dayes come, they find us so unready, and our Spiritual Concernments so discomposed, as usually they do. But (my Beloved), as ever you would have all right, and in order in
your

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your Souls against a dying-hour comes let me recommend this to you , as one special Help ; Maintain a deep and frequent remembrance of Death and the Grave upon our Spirits ; remember the days of darkness, and that especially these two ways :

1. Remember them so , as to have them much in your Meditation : be much and frequent in the Contemplation of Death and the Grave : This the Holy Ghost calls a *Considering our latter End* ; and withal, mentions it as a Business of great importance to us , *Deut.* 32. 29. To Consider, is to revolve a thing in our Minds, and to keep it much in our thoughts and Meditations. And thus we should consider our latter End, and remember the Days of darkness : This is that the Saints of old have been much conversant in ; they were much and frequent in the Thoughts and Meditations of Death : as I might instance in the good old Patriarchs, *Job, David,* and others : And 'tis what does marvellously conduce to our preparation for it. *The meditation of Death* (saith one) *is Life* : it is that which greatly promotes our Spiritual Life ; therefore walks

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walk much among the Tombs, and converse much and frequently with the thoughts of a Dying-hour.

2. Remember them so, as to have them daily in your expectation. In the midst of all your Enjoyments, expect Death's approach daily: this is called *a waiting for our Change*. All the days of my appointed time, will I wait till my Change comes, Job 14. 14. And we are commanded to wait for the coming of our Lord; as that which lies in the directest tendency to the exactest readiness and preparation for his Coming, Luke 12. 36. Expect Death every hour, (saith one), for 'tis every hour approaching thee: In the Morning, when thou risest, think with thy self, this may be the last Day: In the Evening, when thou liest down, think with thy self, this may be the last Night I may ever have in this World; I know not when my Lord will come, whether in the Morning, or in the Evening, at Midnight, or at the Cock-crowing: therefore I will be always expecting his Coming. Woe, and alas for us! We are apt to talk of many Years yet to come, as he did, Luke 12. 9. whereas we should live in the expectation

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tion of Death every moment. Thus let us consider the days of darkness, it will marvellously conduce to the preparation of the Soul for them : the Meditation and expectation of Death will conduce much (among others) to these four things :

1. It will conduce much to our humbling and self-abasing ; *Let a man own himself to be a Mortal (saith Austin), and Pride will, it must down : And think frequently of Death (saith another), and thou wilt easily bring down thy proud Heart.* Hence also the consideration of Death is often in Scripture mentioned by the Holy Ghost, as an argument to make us humble ; *Dust thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou return,* Gen. 3. 19. as elsewhere.

2. It will conduce much to the weaning of our Hearts from this World, and the loosening of them from the things here below : *The time is short,* (saith the Apostle) ; *What then ? Why it remaineth, that they that have Wives, be as though they had none ; and those that weep, at those that wept not ; and those that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not ; those that buy, as though they possessed*

not ;

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not; and they that use this World, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this World passeth away, 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31. He mentions the shortness of Time, as that the Meditation and expectation whereof, has the directest tendency in it, to wean and loosen the heart from all things here below. And indeed, (as St. Bernard hath it) *he easily contemns all things here, who looks upon himself as dying daily.*

3. It will conduce much to the engaging the Heart to Heaven, and the things of Heaven, to a serious pursuit of a blessed Eternitie. So we find, Heb. 11. 13, &c. *These all died in the Faith (saith the Apostle) not having received the Promises; but having seen them afar off, and were perswaded of them, and embraced them: and confessed, that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth: that is, they were apprehensive they had but a little time to stay here: And what then? They desire a better Countrey; that is, an Heavenly: the apprehension they had of their departure hence, quickned them unto earnest desires and pursuits after the better Countrey, the Heavenly Land: And indeed,*

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deed one great reason why we breathe no more, and press no more after Heaven and a blessed Eternity, is, because we so seldom remember these days of darkness.

4. It will conduce much to the quickning of the Heart to Duty, and to diligence and faithfulness therein. Christ himself made use of it for this end: *I must work the Works of him that sent me, while it is Day; the Night cometh, when no man can work*, John 9.4. Peter also, that Holy Apostle, made use of it to that End: *I will not be Negligent* (saith he) *to do so and so in the way of my Duty; as knowing that shortly I shall put off this Tabernacle*, 2 Pet. 1. 12, 13, 14. The consideration of the near approach of his Death, quickned him to his Work and Duty. And the Scripture propounds it, as that which has a tendency to this Thing: *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy Might*, (saith Solomon): *for there is no Work nor Counsel in the Grave, whither thou art going*, Eccles. 9. 10. He propounds the Consideration of our going to the Grave, as a means to quicken us to our present Work. By all which we see,

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see, how much the serious remembrance of the Days of Darkness must needs contribute to our readiness and preparedness for these Days: Therefore be much in this Work. For my own part, I have hardly found any one thing more quickning and engaging upon my Spirit, than this: And Souls, I would beg you, as you would live for ever, think often of Death.

2. Would you indeed set all things right in your Souls, and make all ready for a dying-hour? Then be not fond of long-life here in this World; but rather covet to live, as much as possible, in a little time: I would speak of each distinctly.

1. Be not fond of Long-life here in this World. A fond hope and desire of Long-life here, is one of the greatest Enemies to a true preparation of Soul for our departure hence. For pray observe, take a Man that is fond of Long-life here, and all his thoughts and projects are for this World: He is wholly taken up about, and carried out after the concern of Time, scarce allowing himself one serious thought for Death and Eternitie: A sad instance you have hereof

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hereof in the Rich Man , *Luke 12. 19.* he reckoned upon many Years , upon a Long-life here ; and what are the things he is taken up about ? Verily the things of this World only, the encrease of his Goods , and where to store his Treasures : Fond hopes, and desires of Long-life here, will certainly produce great delays , if not utter Neglects , in the great Work and Concern of our Souls and Eternitie. As ever therefore you would have all right and well in the Concerns of your Souls, when you come to die, be not fond of Long-life here ; but sit as loose in your thoughts, hopes, and desires, both of this life, and all the enjoyments of it , as possibly you can. And indeed (my Beloved) , to reason it a little with you , why should you be fond of Long-life here ? why should you covet a long-stay in this World ? I would only plead with you in two things as to this :

1. What is this World, and what have we here , that we should here covet a long-stay ? Is this World such a sweet, such an amiable, such a desirable Thing ? It is an angry World, a frowning World, a dirty World, a bewitching

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witching, ensnaring World: 'Tis a waste howling Wilderness, a strange Land, an house of Bondage, a troublesome, tempestuous Sea, an *Aceldama*, a Field of Blood: such I am sure 'tis oftentimes to the poor Saints and people of God: And what have we here? Why here we have *fears within, and fightings without, Troubles on every side*, and from all hands; from Friends, from Enemies, from Men, from Devils: here we have Sorrows, Snares, Losses, Wounds, Deaths, Dangers, Temptations, Seductions, Disappointments, *vexation of Spirit*: and truly little else is to be expected by us here, except that which is worse than all this, *viz.* daily risings and ebullitions of Lust, violent eruptions of Corruption, great aboundings of Sin and Iniquity, both in our selves, and others; continual breakings with God, and departings from him, renewing and encreasing Sin and Guilt daily. Indeed this World is full of Sin, and temptation to Sin: 'Tis (as *Augustine* speaks of it) *tota Tentatio*, all Temptation: and as it is all Temptation, so 'tis little else but Sin; and why should we covet a long stay here?
Why

94 *The Great Concern; or*

Why (saith one of the Ancients) *should we so much desire that life, in which, by how much the longer we live, by so much the more we sin; and the more numerous our days are, the more numerous will our sins be?* Who would desire to stay long in a Prison, or a Dungeon, in a state and place of sin and sorrow? and such is this World.

2. Is there not a better life, a better place, a better state for our Souls to long and aspire after? what do you think of the life above, a whole Eternity spent in the Divine Presence, in the bosom of Divine Love, a life of Love, a life of Pleasure, a life of Joy, a life of Admiration, a life of Holiness, perfect and unspotted Holiness, a life every way correspondent to the Divine Life, and the Divine Will? is not this a better life? *To be with Christ, is best of all*, Phil. 1. 23. To possess a Mansion in our Father's House, prepared by our Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, for us: to live for ever in the vision and fruition of Father, Son, and Spirit: to dwell in the Heavenly City, where no unclean thing can enter: to join in with the glorious Host of Saints, and Angels above, and with them to spend a whole Eternity in Songs,

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ongs of Praise and Hallelujahs to God,
and the Lamb: to take up all our waters
at the Fountain-head; and indeed to
live and bathe unchangeably in the
Fountain of all delights at the Father's
right-hand: Oh how sweet is this life,
and how much to be desired by us? In
a word (my Beloved) the Saints, when in
the best frame, have many of them been
so far from being fond of long life here,
that indeed they have thought it long till
the time came, when they should go hence
and be no more, crying out with an holy
impatience; *Why is his Chariot so long a
coming? why tarry the wheels of his Cha-
riot?*

2. Covet to live much in a little time:
'Tis said of that Reverend and Worthy
Divine, Dr. *Breton*, that he desired to,
and accordingly did, live much in a little
time. And our Lord himself (you know)
did not live long in this World; but he
lived much in a little time: he did much
work in a few days for God and Souls.
And indeed (my Beloved) 'tis not a
long life, but a fruitful life, that is most
amiable, most desirable, and most like
his life, who is Life it self. 'Tis not he
that lives many years, but he that lives
much

much in a few Years, that is the most happy Soul. I know those, whose Ambition it is not to live long, but to live fruitfully, and to do as much as possibly they can in a little time; and might they have their Option or Choice, it would be this, to live much in a little time, and then have their dismissal to Rest. And (my Beloved) let this be your Choice, and your Ambition; be casting about in your selves, how you may live much in a little time; how you may compass much Spiritual Work and Business in a few days: Labour to treasure up much Grace, much Experience of God, and his Love; to bring a large Revenue of Glory to him, and the like. And for this end, possess your Souls with a deep sense of the exceeding worth and preciousness of Time; and accordingly set your selves to redeem it, looking upon the loss thereof to be the greatest loss in the World, *Ephes. 5. 16.* we are commanded to *redeem the Time*; And what is it to redeem the Time, but to esteem Time as precious, as a thing of incomparable Worth and Value; and accordingly to make the best and highest improvement of

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of it for the honour of God, and good of our Souls, that possibly we can? It is to fill up our time with Duty, and our Duties with Grace: to make use of Time for those ends, for which Time is given us; not to eat, and drink, and solace our selves in the Creature, but to serve and honour the Creator; to *work out our Salvation*; to get acquaintance with God and Christ; to make sure of Heaven, and a blessed Eternity. O Sirs, look upon time as precious; so indeed it is: Time is the most weighty and momentous thing in the World, 'tis that which our Eternal All depends upon: According as we do, or do not manage and improve our time well, so will it go with us for ever. 'Tis a sweet meditation which I have read in a discourse of an holy Man; *This Life* (saith he) *of ours is most swift; and yet in it Eternal Life is either gotten, or lost for ever. This Life of ours is most miserable; and yet in it Eternal Happiness is either gotten or lost for ever.* No less than a whole Eternity of Happiness, or Misery, Salvation, or Damnation, depends upon our use and management of our little time here in this World.

98 *The Great Concern ; or,*

As the Tree falls, so it lies, Eccles. 11. 3.
 As it is with us when we go out of this
 Time, so it will be with us to all Eternity :
 and this we should be much in the thoughts
 of, accounting therefore the loss of time to be
 the greatest loss. *Time* is a weighty saying,
 which I have read in one of the Ancients :
It is a great and heavy loss indeed (saith he)
when we neither do good nor think good (and let me
 add *nor get good*) *but we suffer our Hearts to wander*
abroad, about vain and unprofitable things :
and yet it is too difficult to restrain or keep them back
from these things. Truly no loss like the loss of Time :
 the loss of Estate, the loss of Trade, the loss
 of this or the other outward Comfort is nothing
 to the loss of time. These being lost, may be
 recovered again : but Time being lost, can never
 be recovered more. Accordingly set your selves
 to redeem it, and do it as much as possibly you
 can, accounting that day lost, wherein you have
 not done something for God, and your Souls.
 The truth is, we live no more than we are
 conversant in the work of God, and our Souls :
 For, as for that which we call Life, that is
 not spent in this work, it is not indeed to be
 accounted Life.

Third-

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Thirdly; Would you indeed set all things right in your Souls, make all ready for a dying-hour? Then think much and often with your selves, how great a change Death will make with you when ever it comes. Death is a change, and in many respects the greatest Change which the Sons of Men are to pass through: *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my Change come,* Job 14. 14. Job had many Changes, and great Changes; *Changes and War were upon him,* as he complains, Job 10. 17. But no change like this of Death; this was the great Change, and this he waited for all his days. Indeed Death is a great change to every Man and Woman, come when, and how it will: 'tis that (as you have heard) that deprives Men of all their enjoyments here; which dissolves the union between Soul and Body; which turns the Body to dust and putrification; and (which is unspeakably more than this) it is that through which the Soul enters into the immediate Presence of God, and states it in Eternitie; it is a Change from Time to Eternitie, from Work to Rewards, a Reward suitable to the Work we have here

100 *The Great Concern ; or,*

been doing, whether it be good or evil, and is not this a great change? Take a few hints in particular about it, to shew the greatness of it.

First, it is such a change, as all other changes upon the outward Man, are but leading and introductory unto, and into which at last they all issue, and resolve themselves. We pass through many changes here in this World ; we may say as *Job, Changes and War are upon us* ; but these are but leading and preliminary, as it were, to this last and great Change : these all are, or should be to us Monitors of this last Change, and do but a little darkly shadow it out unto us.

Secondly, it is such a Change, as calls for great spiritual Changes to pass upon us here, to fit and prepare us for it ; a change in our Minds, a change in our Wills, a change in our Affections, a change in our Conversations, a change in our whole Man ; a real Change, a thorough Change, an universal Change ; *Old things must be done away, and all things must become new*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. The Mind must be changed from Darkness to Light, from Ignorance to Knowledge

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ledg in spiritual things : The Will must be changed from enmity to subjection, from rebellion to obedience to God and his Laws : the Affections must be changed from Earthliness to Heavenliness, from Carnality to Spirituality : the Conversation must be changed from Sin to Holiness ; from Vanity and Loosness, to Strictness and Seriousness in walking with God. Oh how great must that change be, that calls for so many, and so great changes, to fit and prepare us for it ?

Thirdly, it is such a change, as though it do not put us out of being, yet it puts us into a quite other manner of being than ever we yet had ; a change which sets us naked before the Tribunal of God, to receive a definitive Sentence of Life or Death from him ; a change which brings us into the immediate sight of God, either as a gracious Father, or as a revenging Judge ? a change, which fully opens the Eyes of the Soul, and makes him to see both Grace and Sin, Heaven and Hell ; Grace in its Amiability, Sin in its Odiousness, Heaven in its Glory, and Hell in its Horrour : for (my Beloved) whatever we are, whether

good or bad, Saints or Sinners; yet when we die, our Eyes will be fully opened, to see these things; we shall see unutterable things; if we be good we shall see them with Joy and Exultation; if we be bad, we shall see them with Anguish and Confusion of Soul.

Fourthly, It is such a Change, as makes us capable of, and actually puts us into unspeakably greater things, either of Happiness or Misery, Comfort or Confusion, than ever here we knew, or were capable of; a Change, which in one moment, in the twinkling of an eye, carries the Soul from small first-fruits to the full vintage; from a few drops, to a bottomless boundless Ocean of either Happiness or Vengeance, Delight or Torment. And withal there leaves him without any possibility of Change or alteration for ever, but that of its reunion with the Body: for it is such a Change as leaves the state of the Soul for ever unchangeable. O then, think much and often with your selves, how great a change Death will make with you? Certainly did Men think, and consider with themselves, how great a Change Death will

will.

ye will make with them, when it comes, they would not leave the matters of their Souls in such disorder and discomposure, in such an unready posture for it as they do.

Fourthly ; Would you indeed set all right in your Souls, and make all ready for a Dying-hour ? Then presently set upon Soul-work, without admitting of the least delay or procrastination upon any account whatsoever : delays, and procrastinations in the work of our Souls and Eternity, is the high way to Death and ruine. What was it that ruined the foolish Virgins, but their delays in this great Work, and their neglect of the great Concerns of their Souls, till it was too late to mind them ? *Mat. 29. begin.* Felix also was in a fair way, and had a fair opportunity before him, to have provided for another World ; but he delayed, and his delay (for ought we know) was his ruine, *Acts 2. 25.* Truly the Heart is very apt to delay and procrastinate Soul-work : it is apt to cry out to morrow, to morrow. Hence it is that the Scripture calls so often upon us for a speedy engaging in the work of our Souls ; the Scripture saith, *New, and, to*
F. 4. day ;

104 *The Great Concern ; or,*

day: now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation, 2 Cor. 6. 2. And, to day if ye will hear his voice, barden not your hearts, Heb. 3. 7, 8. And if the Scripture saith now, why shouldest thou talk of hereafter? if the Scripture saith to day, why shouldest thou talk of to morrow? Austin confesseth this, and withal tells us, there is scarce any end of delays, if once we give way to them: I delayed (saith he) to be converted to God, and put off my living to him from day to day. And elsewhere he tells us, that when God calleth upon him to awake to his work, he returned nothing but a few sleepy words, Anon Lord, (saith he) anon, bear with me a little: but this anon and anon had no end; and this bear with me a little, went on a long way. Take heed of this; this hath been the ruine of thousands, and ten thousands: how many have been convinced that it is their duty, and interest both, to fall in with the work of God and their Souls, to make preparation for another World? but they have put it off till hereafter, and satisfied their Consciences with resolutions hereafter to do so and so; and have thus lost their season:

season : Oh fall presently without delay upon Soul-Work. And to quicken you a little hereunto, consider four things:

First, Consider the unreasonableness of delays; no just Plea can be made, nor true account given, why you should delay your Soul-Work one moment: the Devil and a Man's own Heart will make many Pleas, but no just Plea can be made; they will tell you, it is too soon, you are young, and have time enough before you: what need you engage so soon? But is this a rational Plea? Is it too soon to be saved, too soon to be happy, too soon to secure your Eternal Interest? Is it too soon to lay hold on Eternal Life? Is it too soon to know and enjoy God? Is it too soon to be out of danger of perishing eternally? Why truly it cannot be too soon for these things. Besides, God calls for thy Youth, *Remember thy Creatour in the days of thy Youth*, Eccl. 12. 1. And he greatly values the kindness of thy Youth, *Jer. 2. 2.* Again, they will suggest, that such and such a business must be dispatched; such a work done and carried off your hands, and then you may attend this Work;

Lord (saith he to Christ) *I will follow thee ; but suffer me first to go and bury my Father.* And saith another, *Lord, I will follow thee ; but first let me go and bid them farewell, which are at home,* Luke 9. 57, 61. But friends, let me ask you if there be any business to be dispatched, like the business of your Souls, and Eternity ? is there any thing upon your hand, that is of so much worth, as your Souls ? and of so much weight as Eternity ? is there any thing you are so nearly concerned to mind, as that which is indeed the one thing necessary, even the saving of your Souls ? Oh the whole World is nothing to this, and the greatest concernments on Earth are but trifles to this Concern. Again, they will tell you, it is an inconvenient season, and hereafter the work may be better done, and minded by you, than now it can ; which was *Felix* his case, in the place before mentioned, *Acts* 24. 25. But hear-ken Soul, art thou sure of another season ? and art thou sure that that will be a more convenient season ? Surely no : if it be not convenient to day, thou mayest fear it will be less convenient to morrow, that Devil and deceitful heart that
tells

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tells thee it is not convenient now, will make provision that it shall be less convenient hereafter. O therefore, break through all these pleas, and fall speedily upon Soul-work.

Secondly, Consider the danger of delays : delays in this case are exceeding dangerous ; one days, yea (for any thing I know) one hours delay herein, may prove thine Eternal undoing ; it may prove the loss of Christ, the loss of Heaven, the loss of thy Soul, and all for ever. Alas ! Art thou sure thou shalt live one day, one hour more in this World ? for ought thou knowest the next moment thou goest down into the Grave, *Job 21. 13.* But in case thou shouldest live longer in the World, art thou sure the Gospel, and the means of Grace, shall be continued to thee ? if thou shouldest not be taken from the World, yet the Gospel may be taken from thee ; though the day of thy life may last a while longer, yet the day of Gospel-Grace and Mercy may suddenly expire : and if that be once gone, all the tenders of Christ, all the offers of Grace, all the exhibitions of Life and Salvation are gone ; if the Gospel be once gone, thy season is gone,

gone, and thy Soul is gone, and thy Salvation is gone, and that for ever; therefore, saith the Apostle, *Now is the accepted time*, speaking of the day of Gospel-Mercy, *now is the day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2. Or grant thou shouldest live, and the Gospel should be continued to thee, as to the outward means; yet art thou sure that the day and season of Grace will last any longer than this present moment? remember that sad word which the Lord breathed out with Tears in his Eyes, over neglecting Jerusalem, Luk. 19. 42. *O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy Day, the things that belong to thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* Alas! how soon may God withdraw his Spirit from thee? how soon may he call home his grieved Spirit from thy neglecting, resisting Soul, once for all, saying, My Spirit shall strive no more with that Man? Gen. 6. 3. How soon may God seal thee up under judicial blindness and hardness of Heart, so that thou shalt never be able to believe, or to do any thing for the good of thy Soul, in order to the other World? Thou talkest of to morrow, and of hereafter; but who knows, but that before

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to morrow, God may clap the Seal of an hard Heart, and a blind Mind upon thee? so as that though thou shouldest live a thousand years, and withal enjoy the fairest means that ever any Soul enjoyed; yet thou shouldest be never able to believe or repent, to do any thing for the working out of thy Salvation. It is often-times his way of proceeding with neglecting, delaying ones, *Isa. 6. 10. Job. 12. 39, 40.* Or how soon may the Oath of God go forth against thee? Thou talkest of to morrow; but alas! who knows but that before to morrow, *God may swear in his Wrath, thou shalt not enter into his Rest?* It is what is threatned against such as will not hear his Voice to day, but harden their Hearts against him, *Heb. 3. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.* There is a time when God's Oath goeth forth against such and such Sinners, for their contempt and neglect of Christ and Grace; a time, not only when God saith, but Swareth and that in Wrath, that they shall never enter into his Rest; and if once God's Oath is gone out against a Man, that Man is past recovery: then farewell Christ, and Heaven, and Soul, and all for ever. O how dangerous are delays! therefore
take

take heed of them, and fall presently upon Soul-work.

Thirdly, Consider the disadvantage of delays. Delays herein are disadvantageous, as well as dangerous. Indeed were there no danger in them (I mean as to the Eternal state) yet the disadvantage of them is so great, as if rightly considered, might be enough to antidote the Soul against them; and engage it presently in the work which relates to another World. Pray consider it a little: by delays the Soul loseth much sweet communion with Christ, and many a blessed communication of Love from him, which he might enjoy: the sooner we fall upon the work of Heaven and Eternity, the sooner we come to a taste and beginning of Heaven, and a blessed Eternity in our Souls: O the sweet Embraces, the Blessed Discoveries, the glorious Incomes of Love, and Delight that the Soul loses, by his delays to get into Christ, and to walk with God, and to mind Eternal Concernments? Poor Soul, by thy delays thou hast lived upon Husks and Swill all thy dayes hitherto, whereas thou mightest have eaten Bread in thy Fathers House, and drunk Wine
new.

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new in thy Fathers Kingdom: thou hast lived on the muddy, dungy, drossie delights of Sin and the Creature, whereas thou mightest have solaced and delighted thy Soul with those Chrystal streams of undefiled Pleasures, which are at Christ's and the Father's right hand. Besides, by delays the work of thy Soul grows more difficult; hereby Corruption grows more strong, and the Heart grows more hard: by every dayes delay, the old enmity strengthens it self, and the Soul is more and more settled upon its lees. For accustomedness in sinning hardens the Heart in Sin, as is hinted, *Jer.* 13. 23. Every day the Soul is more alienated from Christ, and hardened against him. At best, if thy Soul doth at last come to see thy need of Christ, and desireth to close with him, and to mind the work and concerns of another World; yet the longer thou delayest this business, the greater temptations thou wilt have to get over: for, though now thy Heart saith it is too soon; yet after a few days delay, it will say it is too late; it will be apt to conclude that now thy day is over, and now Christ will have nothing to do with thee

thee : O why shouldest thou be such an Enemy to thy own Soul, as to run in upon these disadvantages ? rather avoid them, by falling presently upon Soul-Work.

Fourthly, Consider the sinfulness of delays, and the horrible guilt they bring upon the Soul : as delays are dangerous, and disadvantageous ; so they are sinful too, exceeding sinful, and provoking to the God of Heaven. The truth is, were there no danger in them, no disadvantage by them to the Soul ; yet the sinfulness of them is such, as should make us afraid of them : In every days delay to mind and pursue Soul-Work, there is positive Rebellion and Disobedience to the Will and Command of God : for the Command is, *To day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts*, Heb. 3. 7, 8. By delaying therefore, thou rebellest against the Commandment. In every days delay to mind and pursue Soul-Work, there is horrible unkindness and ingratitude to God and Christ ; which surely is a black Sin, and brings great guilt upon the Soul. God spares you time after time, when he might cut you off the next moment :
and.

and this he doth that you may pursue the work of your Souls and Eternity: and oh what unkindness, what ingratitude must it be in us to neglect, and put off this work? In every delay to mind and pursue Soul-work, there is much contempt of Christ and Grace; and this is that which makes it to be exceeding sinful: Christ offers himself, and his Grace to you, he offers you Life, he offers you Peace, he offers you Pardon, he offers you Righteousness, he offers you Strength, he offers you all the Treasures of Heaven; and withal calls upon you to accept these offers, and to take home these things to your selves; but you, by your delays, pour contempt upon all; you in effect say, neither Christ, nor his Grace, neither Christ, nor the purchase of his Blood, are worth minding, worth looking after. Oh what contempt is this? and what Sin is this? By delays you do in effect say, there is something better than Christ, and something of greater concernment to you than Salvation by Christ; you plainly say, that indeed you will have Christ hereafter, and Salvation hereafter, but for the present, you had much rather have your
your

114 *The Great Concern; or,*

your Lusts and worldly pleasures, O tremble at the thoughts of this, and let it affright you out of your delays, and put you immediately upon Soul-work. In a word; Never any pretended that they minded the concerns of their Souls, union with Christ, walking with God, making sure their Calling and Election so soon; many have repented that they have minded these things so late. I remember a bitter complaint of *Austin* in his Book of Confessions, *I have loved thee too late*, saith he; *O thou so ancient, and yet so new a Beauty, I have loved thee too late.* He bewails that he had so long laid out his love upon the creature, and not given Christ his love. Could you ask all the Saints in Heaven whether ever they repented that they minded the work of Christ, and their Souls, so soon: they would tell you, No, they repented of nothing but that they minded it so late. Once more therefore let me call upon you, to fall immediately upon Soul-work, and never rest till thy heart cries out to God, as *Austin* did, when God had really shewed him himself, and made him sensible of his Sins; *When God, saith he, had shewed*

me

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When my Sin and Misery, there arose a great storm within me, which carried with it a great shower of Tears; and indeed, I let loose the Reins to Tears, crying out to God in such words as these, O Lord, how long, how long wilt thou be angry? how long shall it be said to morrow, and to morrow? wherefore may it not be now? why may there not an end be put to my Sin and filthiness this very hour? And indeed, God made that very season, the season of his Conversion: So labour, to see thy Sin and Misery so far, as that mayst cry out with a holy restlessness to God, how long shall it be to morrow, and to morrow? why may I not be turned to thee now? why may not my Soul be engaged in the work of Heaven and Eternity now?

Fifthly, Would you indeed set all right in your Souls, and make all ready for a dying hour? then be much and importunate with God in Prayer, to teach you so to number your dayes, as to apply your Hearts to Wisdom: This I ground upon *Psal. 90. 12.* where Moses the Man of God is found in this practice, *Lord (saith he) teach us so to number our dayes, that we may apply our Hearts unto.*

116 *The Great Concern; or,*
unto Wisdom: To number our days, is not
to number them in an Arithmetical, but
spiritual way; it is not to cast up how ma-
ny days the life of Man consists of, that is
easily done: but it is spiritually and pra-
ctically to consider, and lay to heart, the
shortness and uncertainty of our Lives, to-
gether with the various miseries and cala-
mities that do attend them. So Molterum.
It is seriously and fiducially to contem-
plate the vanity of Life, as short and un-
certain, and as attended with Sorrows,
Miseries, and innumerable troubles, and
to apply the Heart to Wisdom; 'tis to
make Religion, and the work of a Man's
Soul, his main business; it is to make it
his great business and endeavour, to get
an interest in God and Christ, in the Co-
venant of Grace, and Eternal Life; and
in time to provide for, and make sure of
a blessed Eternity; it is to set a Man's
whole Soul to the work of God, and his
own Salvation. Now, as ever ye would
indeed make ready for a dying-hour, beg
of God to teach you thus to number your
days, and thus to apply your hearts to
Wisdom. There are two things I would
observe, and so close this.

First, That such a numbring of our
days

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days, is what the best of Saints need, and may make great use of. *Moses* was a very holy Man, and yet he looked upon it as a work useful, and of great importance to him, to contemplate the vanity of life, and to think of the shortness and uncertainty of his abode here; the most holy Souls need this; the most holy Souls need humbling, they need weaning from this World, they need quickning unto Duty, they need to have their Hearts awakened, to mind Heaven, and a future Life: and the right numbering of our days, is that which greatly conduceth hereunto.

Secondly, observe, That as this is a work needful and useful for the best of Saints to be employed in; so it is a work above their own strength, and that which they need Divine Assistance to enable them unto. *Moses* was an eminently holy Man, and yet as he saw he had need of this, so he saw it was a work above his Power; and therefore he goes to God, and puts in himself amongst the rest, and prays for his teachings herein. Let us do likewise, let us lie much at the foot of God for his teachings, whereby we may be enabled
so

118. *The Great Concern ; or,*

so to number our dayes, as thus to apply our hearts unto wisdom ; beg him to make us see the vanity and uncertainty of our Lives, and that so as effectually to engage us to make out after a better Life.

C H A P. VIII.

Wherein more particular Helps and Directions are laid down, in order to the setting of things right, and making all ready for a dying-hour.

BUT I would come nearer this great Business, and give you some more particular Directions, in order to your making all ready for a dying-hour. And First, Would you indeed have all things right in the matters of your Souls for a dying-hour ? Then get into Christ, get union with Christ, and an interest in Christ by believing. Union with Christ, and an interest in Christ, is most requisite and necessary to fit and prepare us for a dying-hour ; and without we have it, we can have nothing set right, nothing in order, nothing in readiness for

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for that hour : You know how the
Scripture speaks, *He that hath the Son,*
hath Life ; but he that hath not the Son of
God, hath not Life, 1 John 5. 12. and
there is no condemnation to them which are
in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8. 1. O my Be-
loved, we shall live, or die, be saved, or
damned for ever ; according as we do,
or do not get an union with Christ, and
an interest in Christ. This is that which
lies at the Bottom and Foundation of
all, of all our Hopes, of all our Mer-
cies, of all our Comforts, of all our Ac-
ception and Communion with God,
of all Grace on Earth, and all Glory
in Heaven : and without it, whatsoever
our attainments in Religion are, what-
ever our Profession may be, what-ever
place or esteem we may have in the
Church of God, though never so raised
and eminent, yet we have not any thing
that will avail us in a dying-hour. I
remember a saying of a Learned Man,
That thou mayest live in Death, saith he,
get into Christ, implant thy self into Christ
by believing. Faith joyns and unites us
to Christ : And they that are in Christ can-
not die, for Christ is their Life. And in-
deed, if we have union with Christ, he
will

120 *The Great Concern ; or,*

will be Life in Death it self to us
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord
 that is, die, having union with Christ
 being implanted into Christ, *Rev. 14.*
 13. If we have union with Christ
 he will not be only Life in Death to us
 but he will even turn Death it self into
 Life ; the King of Terrors into a King
 of Comforts ; insomuch that the Soul
 shall be able to triumph over it, as the
 Apostle doth, *1 Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57.*
 Whereas without this, without union
 with Christ, and an interest in Christ
 we shall never be able to look Death in
 the face with comfort, but shall, when
 we come to die, be some of the mis-
 erablest spectacles in the World. It is the
 speech of a worthy Divine, who is long
 since gone hence, *A Christless dying Man*
or Woman (says he) *is one of the saddest*
spectacles in the World : For a Man to be
 dying and not Christless, that is com-
 fortable ; for such a one dies but to
 live for ever, he dies the Death of Na-
 ture, to live the life of Glory : for a
 Man to be Christless, and not dying, is
 something tolerable : for who knows,
 but that the next meeting at an Ordina-
 nance, may be the time of God's love to
 him

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him of drawing him into Christ? but for a Man to be dying and Christless; Christless and dying too, that is intolerable, that is terrible indeed; for such an one dies to be damned, and he is going off from all Hop:s and possibilities of Mercy for ever: Oh therefore, above all, press after Union with Christ, and an interest in Christ: this was *Pauls* great care and sollicitude to the very last, that so he might go off the Stage with Comfort; and that for which he *accounted all things but Dung*, as most base and vile, *Phil. 3* 8, 9. O Soul, didst thou indeed know and consider of how much weight and importance an interest in Christ is to thee, with reference to thine eternal Happiness, thou wouldst cry out as eagerly for Christ, as ever *Rachel* did for Children, saying, Give me Christ, or else I die; give me Union with Christ, and an interest in Christ, or I am undone eternally. Oh look to the great Uniting Act of Faith, make a right Choice of Christ; chuse him as your Lord and Head, your King and Saviour, and renew your Choice of him every Day, resigning up your selves entirely to him, to be saved and governed by him in his own Way.

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Secondly,

Secondly, Would you indeed have all set right, and made ready, in the matters of your Souls, for a dying-hour? Then press after a firm and unshaken assurance of an interest in God, and his Love, and of your right and Title to Eternal Life, of another, and a better Life than this is here. Without some good evidence for Heaven, and some well-grounded assurance of an interest in God, and Eternal Life, things are not ready with us, nor are we in such a preparedness for a dying-hour, as we ought to be. Though a man hath an interest in God, and his Love; though he hath a right and title to Eternal Life and Happiness; yet as long as he is in the dark, and at an uncertainty in his own Soul about it, things are out of order with him, and he is greatly unready for a dying-hour: For pray mark, as our interest in this is requisite to our dying happily, so the sight and assurance of that Interest is requisite to our dying comfortably. Indeed, when a man hath attained to some good evidence for Heaven, to some well-grounded assurance of his Interest in God and Christ; then are things in a good posture with him, in reference to

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a dying-hour, then he can play with Death, and triumph over it; as Job did, when he could say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, Job 19. 25, 26. And as the Apostle seems to speak of it, 2 Cor. 5. 12. *We know that when our Earthly House of this Tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, Eternal in the Heavens: for this we groan earnestly, desiring to be cloathed upon with our House which is from Heaven.* None of you do comfortably leave your House, unless you have another to go unto; much less can you comfortably quit this World, unless you have some well-grounded assurance of another, and a better Life. Take a Man that is in the dark, and at a loss as to his interest in God and Christ, and he knows not what Death will do to him, nor where it will lodg him, whether in Heaven or in Hell, whether upon the Throne of Glory, or in the Prison of Eternal Darkness; in the Bosom of Christs Love, or under the Revelations of his infinite and eternal Wrath: And is such a one ready for a dying-hour? Surely no. As ever therefore you would have things right and ready within indeed for a dying-hour,

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hour, you must press after an Assurance of your interest in God and Christ; you must do as the Apostle exhorts, *Give all diligence to make your Calling and Election sure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. You must every Day press after a fuller and firmer Assurance, as to your Eternal Interest: you must be much in Faith, much in Prayer, much in examining your Evidences; much in proving your state; much in looking after the Seal and Evidence of the Blessed Spirit, which is indeed all in all; and never rest till you can say, My Lord, and My God, My Heaven, My Glory; *God is the Rock of my Heart, and my Portion for ever*. Oh then all will be sweet and well with you. This is that which the Saints of old have laboured after with their whole might: *Say unto thy Soul* (saith David to God), *I am thy Salvation*, Psalm 35. 3. *Set me as a Seal upon thy Heart, and as a Seal upon thine Arm*, Cant. 8. 6. This Austin pressed much after; *Lord*, saith he, *Tell me what thou art to me? say unto my Soul, I am thy Salvation; so say it, that I may hear it: Behold, the Ears of my Heart are before thee; open them, O Lord, and say unto my Soul, I am thy Salvation*. O my Beloved, this is worth pressing

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sing after ; for this is the welcomest news a poor Soul can possibly hear, to be told that God is his , and Heaven is his, and Eternal Life is his ; and when once this news is come , then welcom Life, and welcom Death ; welcom Time, and welcom Eternity ; then the Soul can say, O sweet Eternitie, O blessed Eternitie ! O Sirs, be not satisfied without some good assurance of God's Love to your Souls, and your right and Title to Heaven and Eternal Life ; yea , without the fullest Assurance that is attainable here ; for know, that there are degrees in Assurance it self. The Scripture mentions three degrees of Assurance. First, there is Assurance, *The work of righteousness is Peace, and the fruit of righteousness is Assurance for ever*, Isa. 31. 17. And, *give all diligence to make your Calling and Election sure*, as in the place before quoted. Secondly, there is much Assurance ; *Our Gospel came unto you, not in Word only, but in Power, and in the Demonstration of the Spirit, and much Assurance*, 1 Thess. 1. 5. Thirdly, There is a full Assurance, *We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full Assurance of Hope unto the end*, Heb. 6. 11. Now, my

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Beloved, I would not have you satisfied without Assurance, without much Assurance, yea, without a full Assurance; the more full your Assurance is, the more chearfully, joyfully, and triumphingly will you die.

Thirdly, Will you indeed have all Right, all in Order, in the matters of your Souls, for a dying-hour? Then labour to maintain a constant, actual Peace with God; every Day making even with him, and renewing the sense of his pardoning Love in your Souls, as a firm Union with Christ, and a well-grounded Assurance of an interest in God, and Eternal Life; so also, an actual Peace with God, and a daily renewed Pardon from Him, is requisite to a thorough readiness and preparedness for a dying-hour. *David* had an interest in God; yea, and his interest was clear to him; yet how solicitous was he to get all even between God and him? and how uncomfortable was it with him, till he had renewed his Peace with God, when by his fall it had been broken? *Psal'm 51.8. 12.* This also is what is evidently held forth, *Job 7.21*; where *Job* pleads thus with God, *Why dost thou*

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thou not pardon mine Iniquity, and take away my Transgression? for now shall I sleep in the Dust, thou shalt seek me in the Morning; but I shall not be. In the Verse before, he acknowledged he had sinned; and here he intimates, that God frowned on him for his Sin; the sense of pardoning Love was not renewed in his Soul, which here therefore he pleads for, and that upon this account, because he was speedily to die; intimating, he could not die with Comfort, till he had a renewed sense of God's pardoning Love. And this is the very thing which David begs in the Psalm of my Text, in order to his Comfortable going hence, (*viz.*) that God would take away his Transgressions, Psalm 39. 8. As long as there is any Sin, any Guilt lying upon our Consciences, any Sin unpardoned, any Difference between God and us, any frowns in his Face towards us; we are unready for Death, and cannot with that Comfort and boldness of Spirit welcom it as we ought; but when our Peace with God is maintained, and we have a renewed sense of his pardoning Love in our Souls, then are things right, and in order with us in-

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deed; and we may think of Death with boldness and Comfort, and therefore mind this, as ever you would be found ready for a dying-hour; every Day even things between God and you: every Day get a fresh sense of pardon from him.

First, As near as possible may be, do nothing that may occasion any Breach between God and you, or raise any frowns in his Face towards you: if you do not break with God, he will not break with you; all Breaches, as to Peace and Friendship between God and us, begin on our part; yea, neither will God break with us for little things, in case they be not allowed by us, but watched and striven against; therefore, as near as possible you can, do nothing to break and interrupt your peace with God for one moment: And because when you have done all, many things may and will fall out (we having sinful sinning Hearts, and living in a World of Snares and Temptations) for which God may justly frown upon us: Let us

Secondly, every day make even with him: in the close of every day let us
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consider wherein we have broken with God, come short of Duty, given any Grief, any distaste to his Holy Spirit; and by Faith and Prayer let us sue out the pardon of it; and let us not lie down, if possible, without some intimation of his pardoning Love: for which end,

First, We should act Faith on the Blood and Advocateship of Jesus Christ, *whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, though faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for remission of sins*, Rom. 3. 24 25. And indeed, Christ hath set up a Standing Office in Heaven, which we may call the Pardon-Office; he procureth new Pardons for his People daily under their new sins; *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our sins*, 1 John 2. 1, 2. Have daily recourse to the Blood of Christ; truly without it there is no living; the Best, the Holiest on Earth, have daily need of his Blood, and should have daily recourse unto it, for the maintaining of their Peace, and for the renewing of God's Pardoning-love in their Souls.

Secondly, We should be humbly and

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earnestly

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earnestly importunate with God in Prayer; resolving not to let him go without this Blessing, carrying upon our Spirits the sense of the Worth, and also of our unworthiness of it. Thus the Holy Men of God of old have done: they have sued out the pardon of their Sins by Faith and Prayer, and gotten a fresh sense of Gods Love when they have broken with him; as I might instance in *Job*, in *David*, and others. We should every Day pray, as that Father did, O Lord, saith he, *do not after the manner of a Judge, weigh or consider what I have Done, what I have Spoken, what I have Thought; but blot out all my Sins with thy own Blood.* And as another of them did, O Lord, saith he, *There is that in me which may offend thy Holy Eyes, I know and confess it; but who shall cleanse me? or to whom shall I fly for relief, but to thee? O hide not thy Face from me.* Truly, when we have walked most watchfully, most circumspectly; many things may, and will fall out, that may offend the pure Eyes of Gods Glory, which we should confess and bewail before Him, suing out the pardon of them by the Blood of his Son. Some of the Saints have made
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this their daily Practice, and so have maintained their peace for many Years together; and when they have come to die, have gloriously triumphed over Death; and have gone off the Stage with much Comfort; and so should we.

Fourthly, Would you indeed have all right? all in order in your Souls for a Dying-hour? then be true and faithful to your own Consciences, that you may have them for you, and not against you, both while you live, and when you die. Conscience (my Beloved) is Christs Deputy, or Vicegerent in the Soul; it is both a Judg and a Witness for God within us; it either *Accuses*, or *Excuses*, Acquits, or condemns, *Rom. 2. 15.* And according as Conscience is either for us, or against us; so we are either ready, or not ready; prepared, or not prepared for Death and Judgment: If we have the Witness and Judgment of our Consciences for us, then have we Boldness and Comfort, both in Life and Death; then we can welcom Death's approach to us; but if the Witness and Judgment of Conscience be against us, then Death cannot but be Terrible to us, *This is*

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our rejoycing (saith the Apostle) the Testimony of our Consciences, that in simplicity and Godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the World, 2 Cor.

1. 12. And again, If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things; but if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence

towards God, 1 John 3. 21. Oh, my Beloved, as a peace with God, so a sound and Holy peace with a Mans own Conscience (that is to say, to have the Witness and Judgment of a Man's Conscience for him, and not against him) is highly requisite for a right disposing and preparing of us for a dying-hour. As ever therefore you would have all ready, and in order against such an hour, mind this, and look after this; be sure you carry it so to your own Consciences, as that you may have them always for you, and not against you, while you live; and for you, and not against you, when you come to die. In order to which, mind these two things:

First, Labour to get your Consciences well inlightned and informed, and be much with God in Prayer in order thereto;

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thereto; beg and implore God for a true and faithful Conscience, a Conscience that will bear a true and faithful Witness in your Souls, and that will pass a right Judgment upon things, both upon your state and actions. In *Heb. 10. 21.* we read of a *true Heart*, or a true Conscience, that is, a Conscience rightly informed, a Conscience that bears a true and faithful Witness, and that passeth a true and faithful Judgment upon things: such a Conscience should we beg of God, and labour by all means possible to attain unto. Oh, my Beloved, it is a dangerous thing to have an erroneous Conscience, a mistaking Conscience, a Conscience not rightly informed; For pray mark, This is what leaves a Man under a necessity of sinning, and so of grieving the Spirit of God on the one hand, and it endangereth his peace and Comfort on the other hand; for having an erroneous Conscience, whether we obey it, or obey it not, we sin: if we obey it, we sin, because Conscience commands what is not agreeable to the Word of God; if we obey it not, we sin, because we rebel against the Light and Dictates of Conscience, omitting that
which

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which Conscience tells us is a Duty, though it be not a Duty ; or doing that which Conscience tells us is a Sin, though it be not a Sin ; Labour therefore to get your Consciences well-informed and enlightened.

Secondly, Be sure you do nothing against the light and dictates of Conscience, being rightly informed, but obey it in all things. In *Job 24. 13.* we read of some that *rebel against the Light*, that is, that do sin against their own Consciences ; which is a double sin, a sin clothed with great Aggravations, and greatly discomposeth us for a Dying-hour : but we must take heed of this, and listen to the Voice of Conscience, Conscience regulated by the Word of God : God speaks to us by our Consciences, he speaks to us through his Word by our Consciences, and he speaks to us through his Providences by our Consciences ; and we should take heed of violating the Dictates, or speaking of Conscience in the least. Doth not Conscience many times tell us, Such and such Ways which we Walk in are not Good, and must be turned from, or we are undone for ever ? And now we should be true

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and faithful to our own Consciences and speedily turn from those Ways; we should have nothing to do with any thing that Conscience condemns us in, and for. Again, Doth not Conscience many times tell you, that such and such Duties are totally neglected, or else seldom or slightly performed by you, which yet you ought to be conversant and diligent in the performance of? Now you should herein also be faithful and true to your own Consciences; living up to the Constant, Diligent, Spiritual performance of those Duties. Again, Doth not Conscience many times tell you, that things are not right with you? that it is an evil frame of Spirit you live in? that you are too Carnal, too light, too vain, too frothy, too eager in your pursuits of this World, and too remiss in your pursuits of Heaven and Eternity? Now as ever you would be ready for a Dying-hour, you should be faithful to your own Consciences, setting that right which is amiss, and hastening out of that Evil-frame, into the contrary Gracious-frame. (O my Beloved), If you be true and faithful to Conscience, Conscience will be true and faithful to you; wit-

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witnessing for you, and not against you, both while you live, and when you die. In a word, In all things labour to keep a good Conscience ; this was *Pauls* great care and exercise, *Acts* 24. 16. *Herein do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man* : O this will be a sweet and blessed Exercise, and the more we are found in it while we live, the more Comfort will it afford us when we come to die.

Fifthly, Would you indeed have all things right, and in order in the matters of your Souls, when a dying-hour comes ? Then labour for much Purity of Heart and Life, and by no means admit of any Sin, any Corruption whatsoever ; the more pure and Holy we are, the more ready we are, and in the better posture things are with us for a dying-hour : *Without Holiness*, saith the Apostle, *no man shall see God*, *Heb.* 12. 14. Holiness is necessary unto Happiness ; Holiness is the way unto Happiness ; Holiness is what fits and prepares us for Happiness, and brings us unto Happiness ; yea, Holiness is a part of our Happiness, a great part of the Happiness of Heaven. it

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self lies in Holiness; accordingly the more Holy we are, the more we are suited to, and prepared for the future Happiness, and so for Death and Judgment: for that which prepares us for the future Happiness, that also prepares us for Death, which is but an in-let into that Happiness for ever: Therefore, if you would have all things right, all things ready indeed for a dying-hour, then labour for the exactest Purity and Holiness that possibly you can: This is that which the Apostle aims at, and prays for, on the behalf of the *Thessalonians*, as most conducing to the preparing of them for their latter-End, *1 Thess. 3. 12, 13.* *And the Lord make you to abound and increase in Love one towards another, and towards all Men, even as we do towards you, to the end he may establish your Hearts unblamable in Holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his Saints.* The posture he would have them to be in at the coming of Christ, is the posture of unblamable Holiness, which indeed is the best and readiest posture. The same thing he prays for, in order to the same end, in *1 Thess. 5. 23.* *And the*
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very God of Peace sanctifie you wholly : and I pray God that your whole Spirit, Soul, and Body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is that also which that other Apostle enjoins in order hereunto, 2 Pet. 3. 14. Be ye diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace, without spot ; and blameless. The more spotless and blameless we are in our Spirits and Ways, the more ready we are for Death and Judgment. Oh, to press after an Eminency in Holiness, admitting of none, no not the least taint or Tincture of Sin, or sinful defilement, upon any terms whatsoever : Unholy Souls are unready Souls ; they are unready for Death, unready for Judgment, unready for the future Life : and for Men to talk of being ready for these, and yet be unholy, is the greatest Folly in the World : therefore labour for much Purity and Holiness.

First, Labour for much Purity and Holiness in your Lives and Walkings : this is what God indispensibly calls for, 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16. As he which hath called you is Holy, so be ye Holy in all manner of Conversation : because it is written, Be ye Holy, for I am Holy. We should press after

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after Universal Holiness : there should
be a Vein and Tincture of Holiness run
through all we do, even our Civil, as
well as our Religious actions ; we should
as near as possibly be dedicated and de-
voted to God, and our Lives should be
Lives of Walking with Him : they, and
they only, who Walk with God while
they Live, are those who will be found
ready to live with God, when they
come to die. As for all careless, licen-
tious Ones, let them never talk of being
ready for Death, and the future Life ; for
they are at an utter distance from any
such thing : indeed ready they are, but
for what ? ready for Hell, ready for the
Wrath of God, ready for Destruction ;
but they are not at all ready for a
Blessed Eternitie : The Apostle weeps
over such, as being indeed thus ready,
*Phil. 3. 18, 19. Many walk, of whom I
have told you often, and now tell you even
weeping, that they are Enemies to the Cross
of Christ ; whose end is Destruction, whose
God is their Belly, whose Glory is their
shame, who mind Earthly Things.* Many
there are who profess and hope well of
themselves, as to another Life, who yet
are loose and Carnal, wicked and Licen-
tious,

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tious in their Lives and Walkings : they do not watch and keep their Garments but wallow in the mire of their Lusts and Pollutions : they stain their Profession with foul, gross, and scandalous Sins ; at least they live and allow themselves in some secret Way and Haunt of sinning, indulging this and the other Lust : But (my Beloved) these are far indeed from being ready for a dying hour ; and must expect to be cast off from God and Christ for ever. Such were those, *Matth. 7. 22, 23. They came, and cryed, Lord, Lord : came with their Gifts, Parts, and Priviledges ; but Christ sent them away, with a Depart from me, ye workers of Iniquity : So in Jer. 7. and beginning : we read of some that made profession of God and his Ways, and yet walked in Sin, and wallowed in all manner of Abomination : And what is the issue ? Verse the 15th, saith God, I will cast you out of my sight : God will at last cast off all loose, licentious Walkers. Psalm 21. 9. David prays thus, Gather not my Soul with sinners. And truly, if you would not be gathered with Sinners at last, you must not walk in Sin with Sinners now : and as for the*
Saints

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Saints themselves, so far as they let down their Watch, and neglect their Walking with God: so far as they give way to a loose, vain, heedless way of living; so far they have things out of order with them, and they are unready for a dying-hour. *Behold, I come as a Thief* (saith Christ) *Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his Garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame, Rev. 16. 15.* So far as the Saints carry it unbecoming their high and Holy Profession (which is too too frequent with them) so far they are short of that compleat Readiness for Death and Eternitie they should press after.

Secondly, Labour for much Purity and Holiness in your Hearts and Affections. We must be pure and Holy within, as well as without; in our Hearts and Affections, as well as in our Lives and Walkings, if we would have all right indeed for a dying-hour. *Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his Holy Place?* The answer is, *He that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart, Psalm 24. 3, 4.* And Christ expressly tells us, *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God, Matth. 5. 8.* Indeed, impure

impure Hearts are unfit to see God; He is a pure and Holy God, nor may impure-hearted Ones expect that Blessed Sight. I remember a saying which I have read in one of the Ancients (which I look upon to be a great Saying); *Wo and alas, O Lord, (saith he) how preposterous is it? How rash and unadvised? How inordinate? How remote from the rule of the Word of thy Truth and Wisdom, for a Man to desire to see God with an unclean Heart?* Oh, have watchful Eye upon your Hearts: and labour to keep them as free from any taint and tincture of Sin as possibly you can?

First, Be sure you suffer no Lust to get up into the Throne, where it is too often found. When Sin is consented to by the Will, the Lust is on the Throne in the Heart; and indeed it is wonderful to think, how soon one or another corruption will mount up into the Throne in the Soul, if we let down our Watch but a little. But oh, take heed of this, so far as any one Lust whatsoever is predominant within us, so far we are marvellously unready for a dying hour. And not only so. But,

Secondly

Secondly, Watch narrowly against the very first risings and motions of Sin within : Nip Lust, if possible, in the very Bud and Bloffom. It is true, this calls upon us to have a very curious Eye upon our Hearts, and indeed such an Eye we should have upon them ; we must have upon them, if we mean to be Christians indeed. Grace will teach a Man, not only to oppose the acts of Sin, and to watch against the Reign of any Heart-lust ; but also to oppose the very first motions and risings of Sin in the Soul : And the more you do this, the better posture you are in for a dying-hour.

CHAP. IX.

A further Direction, in order to a compleat Preparation for Death, to press after the noblest strains of Grace. Several of these pointed at, and insisted on, attending herenunto.

Sixthly, **W**ould you indeed have all ready, and in order in your Souls for a Dying-hour ? Then rest

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rest not in low and ordinary, but aspire after the highest and noblest Strains of Grace. The better to understand this, You must know, that there are some higher and more Nobler strains of Grace than ordinary: strains of Grace that carry a peculiar Glory and Excellency in them, and do in an eminent manner delight the Heart of God; indeed, every strain of Grace, even the least and lowest, has a Beauty and Glory in it, and is a pleasure to God's Heart: the least dram of Godly Sorrow, the least Holy Awe of God, and trembling at his Word, the least breathing of Love and desire towards him, the least leaning upon him, in a way of Hope and dependance; Oh, it has a great Glory in it, and is a delight to God's Soul; *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his Mercy,* Psalm 147. 11. But, my Beloved, there are some more Choice and Eminent strains and actings of Grace, that are above the ordinary rate, and do peculiarly delight the Heart of God, and bring Honour to him; and the more you come up to these, and live under the power of these, the more ready posture

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posture you are in for a Dying-hour. Grace is the beginning of Glory: 'Tis (as a Worthy Divine expresses it) *The infancy of Heaven and Glory*; and the higher it rises in us, the nearer it comes to Glory, and the more it fits us for it. Therefore, I say, rest not in low and ordinary, but covet and press after the Highest and Noblest strains of Grace, some of which I shall here set down, and insist a little upon, in order to this great End of being found under the exactest readiness for a Dying-hour. The Noble strains of Grace I would have you come up unto, are these:

1. For a Man to be high, and yet low, high in Worth and Attainments, but low in Spirit; low in his own thoughts and apprehensions of himself, to be humble under high and great Acquirements, this is noble Grace. 'Tis said of *Athanasius*, Ὑψιλότῳ τοῖς ἔργοις, ταπεινός ὃ τὰ φρονήματι — That he *was high in Worth, but low in Spirit*: he had great Attainments, but was very humble and lowly under all, which is mentioned as a peculiar Excellency in him: And I remember a saying which I have read in one of the Ancients, speaking of Humility;

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For a man to be humble (says he) in a low, despicable, abject condition; this is no great matter, but honourable Humility; that is to say, for a man to be humble in an high and prosperous Condition, to be humble under Eminent Enjoyments. This is a great thing, a rare Vertue indeed.

O for a Man to be high in Attainments, high in Gifts, high in Graces, high in Comforts, high in Services, high in Successes, high in Place and esteem among Men; and yet at the same time to be low in mind, low in Heart, low in his esteem and apprehension of himself: this is an High and Eminent strain of Grace; this Paul excelled in, and 'twas his Crown and Glory; he was a Man of as high Attainments and Accomplishments, as most that ever lived; he was high in Gifts, high in Graces, high in Comforts, high in Services, high in Successes, high in all true Worth and Excellency; and yet how low, how humble in Spirit was he? how little in his own Eyes, and how vile in his own Esteem. You know how he speaks of himself. The chief of Sinners, 1 Tim. 1. 15. less than the least of all Saints, Ephes. 3. 8. I am the least of the Apostles: not worthy

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to be called an *Apostle*, 1 Cor. 15. 9. *I am nothing*, 2 Cor. 12. 11. This also was a part of Christ's Crown and Glory: Who ever so eminent in Gifts and Graces? who ever abounded with such Glorious endowments as He? and yet who so Meek, so Humble, so Lowly, as He? *Learn of me* (says he) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*, Matth. 11. 29. In a Verse or two before he had told us, that *all things were delivered to him by the Father*; and yet here, *I am meek and lowly in Heart*: He was humble under all his Advancements and Attainments: Oh labour to be like him herein; whatever your Attainments are, labour to be humble under them, and that because he was so. *Blush, O Dust and ashes: blush to think of being Proud, be ashamed to be Proud: God humbles himself, and dost thou exalt thy self?* so one speaks. And again elsewhere, 'Tis intolerable Impudence (says he) that when Majesty empties and humbles it self, a vile Worm should swell, and be blown up with Pride. O be Humble, whatever your Attainments are: the more Humble you are, the more precious you are in God's sight; for he hath respect unto the lowly, but be-

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boldeth the Proud afar off, Psalm 138. 6.
Yea, He resisteth the Proud, He sets him-
self in Battel-array against the Proud,
James 4. 6. Arrogate nothing to thy self
of those things that are in thee, but thy
sins, by so much the more precious thou art
in Gods Eyes, by how much the more vile
and despicable thou art in thy own Eyes,
says Bernard. And to say no more, None
more ready to die, than the Humble and
lowly Person; none more unready, than
the proud and High-minded.

2. For a man to be full, and yet empty; full of the Enjoyments, and yet empty of the love of the World: for a Man to enjoy an affluence of this Worlds good, a fulness of all Creature-comforts and Contentments, and yet to be dead to all, and sit loose from all, placing his whole Happiness in God and Christ, this is a choice, a noble, an excellent strain of Grace indeed. We read of some, and but of some, in Scripture: who under an affluence of outward Enjoyments have been weaned from all, and sat loose from all, and have kept up their Communion with God, placing the whole rest and Happiness of their Souls therein; some such (I say) we read of in
Scri-

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6. Scripture, but truly they are but very few, and indeed 'tis both a rare and a difficult thing for a Soul thus to do: These things especially, when enjoyed in the fulness of them, are so apt to ingross the Heart to themselves, and to alienate it from God, and Communion with God, that 'tis indeed a very rare and difficult thing for a Man under an affluence of them, to sit loose from them, and make God, and Communion with God, all in all to Him. 'Tis a great Saying which I have read of a Learned Man, *Although Adversity breaks many, yet Prosperity and a fulness of Enjoyments, kills many more: And how rare a Man is that, who in prosperity does not, at least a little in some degree or other, let down his Watch, and remit his strictness and exactness in Walking.* David was a wise Man, and Solomon was a wiser; and yet both the one and the other discovered great sin and folly through abounding prosperity. So that I say, 'tis both a rare and a difficult thing; but by how much the more rare and difficult it is, by so much the more Excellent and Eminent, when attained. Oh for a Man to swim Chin-deep in the streams of

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Creature-comforts, and yet not so forsake the Fountain of Living-waters: for a Man to have the streams run pleasantly on each hand of him, and yet to bathe and delight only in the Fountain, as his Rest and Happiness; for a man in the height of Prosperitie to be able to say to God, as the Psalmist in his affliction did, Psalm 73. 25. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth I desire besides thee:* This is noble Grace indeed. Oh labour to come up to this, whatever your Worldly Enjoyments are, though never so great, so high, so pleasant; yet as ever you would be ready for a dying-hour, sit loose from all, die to all; the more dead we are to the World. The more ready we are to go out of the World. A Worldly Spirit, a Spirit in love with this World, is most unready for a dying-hour. How can he be ready to leave the World, that is in love with the World? A worldly Spirit is most odious to the Spirit of God, and most unsuitable to the future Life; and one living in that Spirit cannot be fit to die. 'Tis a great saying I have read in one, *He is perfect, whose Soul is alienated from the World;* but (says he) *that*
soul

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Soul is far from God, to whom this miserable Life is sweet; that is to say, who is fond of these poor things here. Oh die, die daily to the World under all your Enjoyments of it, if you would indeed be ready to die.

3. For a Man to be empty, and yet full; to be destitute of all outward Comforts and Enjoyments, and yet to want nothing, but to be content, and to see all in God, and enjoy all in God; for a Man to be afflicted, and distress'd, and yet at the same time see a Fulness and Sufficiency of all Good and Happiness in a naked God, and naked Godliness, and accordingly to live upon Him, and rest satisfied in Him; this is a Noble strain of Grace indeed: this the Prophet, and in him the Church resolved upon, *Hab. 3. 17, 18.* *Although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the Vines; the labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no meat; the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls.* Here you see is a most sad supposition, a most forlorn and destitute condition supposed to come; Well, and what then? In case all this comes to pass, what will the Church do

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then ? that the 18th verse tells us, *Yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation:* she is resolved to live upon God, and delight her self with God; she sees enough in him alone, and sets him, and her interest in him, over against all wants, losses, and afflictions. So the Apostles, 2 Cor. 6. 10. who were *as having Nothing, yet possessing all Things:* they saw all in Christ, and enjoyed all in Christ. Here (as one glosses upon the place) *we possess Nothing, but do wander up and down from place to place: yet possessing Christ, in Him we possess all things.* Oh for a Man to see and enjoy all in Christ, when the World frowns upon him, and is low with him, this is a Noble strain of Grace; and let me say this, that 'tis an argument that we have Carnal Hearts, if we see not all in God, and enough in God to satisfy us, and make us Happy, whether we have any thing or nothing of this Worlds. Heaven, which Death sends us to, if we are indeed ready for it, is nothing else but the Vision and Fruition of God, for there he is all in all; and certainly, if we do not see all in God now, and enough in God now, we cannot suppose

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suppose our selves to be so fully ready for Death and Eternitie, as we ought to be.

4. For a Man to have no Affliction, and yet to be deeply afflicted: to be wholly free from all personal Affliction, and yet greatly to lay to Heart, and be afflicted for the Afflictions of Gods Name and People, this is glorious Grace, Grace in lustre. 'Tis the observation of a Worthy Divine, That in the Day of the Churches Trouble and Affliction, when both his Name and People do greatly suffer, God does sometimes leave some of his People an affluence of all outward good things; when others are strip'd of all their Comforts, they are full; when others are in straits, they abound; neither is there any Cloud upon their Tabernacle. And this God does to try them, whether they will take up in their Enjoyments, and forget the afflictions of his Name and People. - And truly not to do so, but in such a case to lay the Churches Afflictions to Heart, and to bleed and mourn with the bleeding-interest of God's Name and People: this is pure Grace, and marvellous pleasing to God. Such Grace some of the Saints

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have

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have come up unto. Such Grace was found in *David*, 2 Sam. 7. 1, 2. And it came to pass, when the King sat in his House, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all Enemies, that the King said unto Nathan the Prophet, See now, I dwell in an House of Cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within Curtains: Mark, all was well with David; he had rest, and he dwelt in an House of Cedar, he had all things suitable for and becoming a King: Ah, but all was not well with the Interest of God and his Worship: *David's* House and Interest prospered; but it fared not so well with the House and Interest of God, and therefore all his Enjoyments were as nothing to him, he so laid the Sufferings of God's Name and Worship to Heart. The like was found in *Nebemiah*, Chap. 2. all things were well with him in his own person: he was the Kings Cup-bearer, and lived under the Enjoyment of an affluence of all outward Accommodations; and yet was in deep affliction of Spirit, upon the account of the Churches affliction: *When I heard these words,* (says he) Ch. 14. These words! What words? why, that the remnant that were left

left of the Captivity were in great affliction and Reproach, that the Wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and that the Gates thereof were burnt with fire. So verse 3. Now when I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned certain Days, and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven. And in Chap. 2. begin. his Countenance, 'tis said, was sad upon this account. Oh this was rare Grace, choice Grace! no personal affliction, yet deeply afflicted in and with the afflictions of the Church; so deeply afflicted, that all his personal Comforts, though great, were nothing to him. The like you find in Daniel, Dan. 10. 2, 3. Oh labour to come up to this strain of Grace: it may be things are well with you, and you have all that Heart can wish; but if they are not so with the interest of God's Name and People, you should be deeply afflicted for this, in the midst of all your personal Comforts, and the more of this Spirit is in you, the more excellent your Grace is.

5. For a Man chearfully to submit to, and acquiesce in the Will of God, when most sharp and severe upon his outward interest, this is a Noble strain of Grace.
When

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When God shall exercise a Man with rending, tearing Dispensations, adding Sorrow to Sorrow to him, breaking him with Breach upon Breach, causing all his waves and his billows to go over him; and yet then for him quietly to acquiesce in, and chearfully to submit to what God does, this is choice Grace: Such Grace was found in *Aaron*, Lev. 10. 3. God slew two of his Sons at once, and the Dispensation was attended with so many aggravating Circumstances, as made it almost unparallel'd, not to be equall'd, so terrible was it; and yet under that great stroke, *Aaron* held his peace, he submitted freely, and acquiesced chearfully. The like was found in *Job*, when God had broken him all to pieces: he worships Him, and bleffes his Name, *Job* 1. 21, 22. And this was eminent in Christ himself, and was indeed his Crown and Glory; *Father, not my Will, but thy Will be done*, Matth. 26. 39. He freely submits his Will to the Father, though he saw the Father coming forth against him in a most terrible Dispensation. Oh for a poor Soul to lie down at the Foot of God, and to be so melted into his Will, as chearfully to bow to it, and acquiesce,
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in it under the sharpest Dispensations: this is Noble Grace indeed. Oh press after this, this is very necessary to prepare us for a Dying-hour; and the more of this, the more ready for that Hour.

6. For a Man to maintain the Actings of his Faith in God, and to think Honourably of Him, when yet he frowns, and all things seem to make against the Soul: this is a noble strain of Grace. Such Grace was found in *Abraham*, who 'tis said, *against Hope, believed in Hope*, and so *was strong in Faith*, Rom. 4. 18, 19, 20. when he had no Encouragement; yea, when all things opposed him, yet then he maintained his Faith in God. So *Job*, Chap. 13, 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* Oh to love a smiting God, and to trust in a slaying God; this is Noble Grace, for a Man to maintain the actings of his Faith in God, when he comes forth as an Enemy against him: This God calls for, He expects that *when we walk in darkness, and see no light, then we should trust in the Name of the Lord*; and so to do is Noble Grace, Isa. 50. 10, 11. Truly 'tis oftentimes the case of God's People, that they walk in dark.

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darkness, and see no Light, all things seem to be against them. Possibly God frowns and afflicts; he frowns within, and he afflicts without: 'Yea, the Poor Soul sees nothing but difficulties and discouragements, look which way he will: he looks into his own Heart, and there he cannot find any one Grace or gracious Disposition; he looks into the Word, and there perhaps he can't see any one Promise that he dares lay hold upon; he looks back for former Experiences, and they are all out of sight; he runs to his Evidences, and they are all blotted that he can't read them. Thus he is beset with difficulties, and all things seem to make against him both within and without; and yet now, when thus in the dark, for the Soul to believe in God, and think well and honourably of him, this is Noble Grace indeed, this is Faith in lustre: to call Christ Lord, when he calls us Dog, and to fasten by Faith upon him, when he is beating us off, as to sense at least, as 'twas with the Woman, *Matt. 15. 26, 27, 28.* this is glorious Grace: for a Man to think well, and hope well, and believe well, in the Face of frowns and discour-

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discouragements : for a Man when God is frowning, and smiting, cordially to say, This is but for a time, he will smile again, he is but behind the Curtain, and will appear again; His desire is not to ruin me, but refine me; He is but making me to prize his Grace and Presence more; there is Love in all this: Oh for a Man to believe that there is Love in God's Heart, when he sees nothing but Frowns in his Face, and meets with nothing hardly but blows from his Hand; for a Man to believe that God intends nothing but good, when he inflicts variety of evils, surely this is glorious Grace: Oh that you would labour for such Grace! such Grace will look Death in the Face with boldness. 'Tis a great Speech which Holy Rutherford hath, *I lay Inhibitions on my Thoughts*: (says he) *that they receive no Slanders of my only, only Beloved*: Let him even say out of his own Mouth, *there is no Hope*; yet I will die in that sweet beguile, it is not so: but I shall see the Salvation of God, it is my Joy to believe under the Water, and to die with Faith in my Hand griping of Christ. Beg such Grace of God.

7. For a Man to see a Beauty and Excellency

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cellency in Service as well as in Enjoyment, in Work as well as in Reward, and accordingly to have his Heart lie in it : this also is Noble Grace. Sirs, there is a Beauty and Excellency in Service for a Man to be used and employ'd for God, and to act for him in the World, is the highest Honour and Excellency (next to Union and Communion with him) that can be put upon a poor Creature : 'twas the honour of Christ, it is the honour of Angels : Service is better than Enjoyment ; *'Tis a more blessed thing to give than to receive,* Acts 20. 35. Now when a Soul has answerable thoughts and apprehensions about it, does practically, and indeed see a Beauty and Excellency in Service for God, and accordingly is active for him, willing to be employed by him, and that though he has no reward at present from him ; this is Noble Grace. This was found in Paul, *Unto me (saith he) is this Grace given to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ,* Ephes. 3. 8. He look'd on't as an Honour, a Favour to be employ'd in the Work and Service of Christ. And again, *1 Tim. 1. 12. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He*
accounted.

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accounted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry. Here he blesses Christ his Lord and Master for using of him in his Work; yea, such a Worth, Beauty, and Excellency did he see in his Service, that he was content to stay out of Heaven, and the bosom of Christ's Love, where yet he earnestly longed to be, that he might do further Service for Christ in this World. So you find *Phil. 1. 21, 22, 23.* Oh for a Soul to long, and long earnestly for Heaven, and the immediate enjoyment of Christ there, and yet to be content to stay here in a sinful Sinning, troublefom World, meerly to do some further service for Christ, and to honour Him yet in the discharge of his Work and Warfare, this is High Grace: this Holy *Rusberford* had attained unto, he could under high assurances of Heaven, be content to stay many years out of it, to preach Christ. The same mind dwelt in Christ himself, *who went about doing Good, making it his Meat and Drink to do his Fathers Will, and to finish his Work.* Oh when a Soul comes to this, then he is fit to Live, and fit to Die; when with that Ancient Father we come to say indeed, *What is it to Live, and not to Live*
for

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for use and Service? when we value Life
and Days in the World, no further than
we are some way serviceable to Christ ;
this is Crowning Grace.

8. For a Man to rejoice in the Gifts,
Graces, and uses of others, and that
though they out-shine and eclipse his :
for a Man to rejoice to see Grace flou-
rishing in others, and to see the Work of
God carried on by others, though he
himself be laid aside, and does not share
in the honour of it, this is pure Grace,
Grace in lustre. Such Grace was found
in *Moses* : *Enuiest thou for my sake?* (said
he to *Joshua*, who would have had him
to forbid *Eldad* and *Medad* to prophesie
in the Camp) *Would God that all the*
Lords People were Prophets, and that the
Lord would put his Spirit upon them,
Numb. 11. 29. He was so far from envy-
ing at them, that he wishes there were
more of them. Such Grace was found
also in *John* the Baptist, John 3. 26, 27, 30.
he rejoiced in Christ's being owned, and
honoured, and flock'd unto, and in the
increase of his Esteem with Men, though
to his own abasement. In verse 26. some
of *Johns* Disciples come and tell him,
That all Men come to Christ ; Well, says
he,

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he, 'tis but his due : *Verse 27. A man can receive nothing, unless it be given him from Heaven : You your selves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ ; and this my joy is fulfilled, that he must increase, and I must decrease :* as if he had said, 'Tis so far from being a trouble to me, that 'tis indeed the compleating of my joy. Such Grace was found in *Paul*, *Phil. i. 18.* who rejoiced that Christ was preach'd, though with a design to cloud and eclipse him : *Christ is preach'd, and I therein do rejoice ; yea, and will rejoice.* Some are apt to think 'twill be an Affliction to me (says he) that Christ is preach'd by any but my self ; whereas indeed this is ground of great Joy to me ; I rejoice, that though I cannot be permitted to preach Christ my self, yet that so many others do preach him. And I remember a great Speech of *Luther* (arguing the same Grace to be in him) writing to *Melancthon*, to comfort him under the Lets and Oppositions the Work and Cause of God met withal in his time ; the Cause of God was opposed, and his Work obstructed, in the sense of which *Melancthon* was greatly troubled and dejected

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jected, and *Luther* understanding it, writes an Epistle to him, to comfort and encourage him, in which he has this saying; *God (says he) is able to raise the Dead, and he is able to support his fallen Cause, and to raise it when fallen ! If he shall not account us worthy to be used therein, let him do it by others, and make use of others.* Mark, He was content the Work of God should be done by others. There are two things which I look upon to carry as pure and noble Grace in them, as any whatsoever : one is, to be willing to be used in God's Work, without being taken notice of, or having the Honour of it : the other is, for a Man to rejoyce to see the Work of God carried on by others, though he himself be laid aside, and has not the Honour of being used therein. Oh labour for such Grace, Grace that will rejoyce in the Gifts, Graces, Uses, and Successes of others, though you thereby are out-shined.

9. For a Man to have great Affection to the Name and Honour of God and Christ, and to think nothing too much to do, too hard to suffer, or too dear to part withal for the Service and Advancement

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ment thereof, this is Noble Grace: when a Man has high and paramount Affections to the Name of God and Christ, loving and preferring of it infinitely before all his own Interests and Concerns, being ready to be, do, or suffer any thing for the Service of it. Oh what Grace is this! Such Grace some of the Saints have attained to. *Lord* (says *Moses* concerning *Israel*) *if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the Book which thou hast written*, *Exod. 32. 32.* What is here meant by the Book which God has written, I shall not now stand to enquire or determine; but to be content to be blotted out of it, was to be sure, a great piece of self-denial; and this *Moses* desired, you see, rather than that the People should be utterly destroyed; and all because he knew how much the Glory of God was concerned, and would suffer by their Destruction, as appears by comparing this *verse* with *verse 12.* the sum (as one observes) is, That *Moses* prefers the Glory of God before his own Salvation, whose Glory was conjoyned with *Israels* preservation, in respect of the Promises made to the Fathers, and in respect of
of

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of the Blasphemies which the Egyptians and other Adversaries were ready to belch out against God, should he destroy them. Such Grace was found also in *John Baptist*, in the place lately mentioned, *John 3. latter end*, who was content Christ should raise himself out of his Abasement. Such Grace was found in Christ, who preferred his Fathers Glory before his own Life, *Joh. 12. 27, 28*. Such Grace was found in *Paul*, who was *willing not only to be bound, but even to die for the sake of Christ, Acts 21. 13*. for the Name, the Honour of Christ: Christ's Honour was so dear to him, that he could be content to die to serve it; he preferr'd it before his Life. Oh, my Beloved, when a Soul shall be so swallowed up with Love and Zeal to the Glory of God, and the interest of Christ in the World, as that his own interests are in a manner overlook'd and forgotten by him; when to see the Name of God exalted, shall be a Mans greatest Triumph; and to see it debased, shall be his greatest Trouble; when his practical language shall be such as this; Father, here I am; which way so ever thy Glory lies, I am ready to serve thee in it; 'tis Honour enough

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enough for me to honour God, 'tis Happiness enough for me to glorifie God; and therefore let God do with me, and let him call me to do whatever he will in order thereunto: Let him if he pleases eclipse my Name, and throw my Glory in the dust, so be it he will thereby raise his own Name, and brighten his own Glory; Let him, if he pleases, make me a Footstool, and let me be trampled upon, so be it he will advance himself into the Throne thereby; Let me die, if his Will be so, that his Glory may live; whatever becomes of me, though I should be strip'd of all, though my name and interest should rot, yet let God be magnified; Let God have Honour in the World, and let the interest and Kingdom of Christ prosper, 'tis enough, I am satisfied. When, I say, 'tis thus with a Soul, this speaks Noble Grace indeed. Oh prels after such Grace; the more you love the Name of God and Christ, the fitter you are either to live or die.

10. For a Man not only to be willing to suffer, but also to rejoice in Sufferings for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, for a Man chearfully to take up the Cross

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Cross for Christ, and to look upon it as his Crown and Glory, as an Honour and preferment to Him; this is also an high strain of Grace, and is greatly pleasing to God. The Cross, my Beloved, in it self is a *black sower Crab-tree*, (as one calls it); but, though such in it self, yet as 'tis born for the sake of Christ, and so his Cross, 'tis an Honour, and not a Reproach, a Crown of Glory, a Royal Diadem upon the Head of a poor Creature: *To you is given on the behalf of Christ, to suffer for his sake*, Phil. 1. 29. Sufferings for Christ are Noble, Royal, Honourable Gifts, more Honourable than the Crowns and Kingdoms of this World: a Prison for Christ, is more honourable than the stateliest Palaces of the greatest Princes: Bonds for Christ, are more honourable than Ropes of Pearl or Diamonds. Now when a Soul shall look on these things as such, and accordingly rejoice in them, this is Noble Grace indeed: Such Grace was found in the Disciples, *Acts 5. 41. Who rejoiced, (or, as the word is, leapt for Joy) that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of Christ; or, as the words may be rendred, that they were Honour'd*

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noured to be dishonoured for Christ. So the Apostle and his Brethren, *Rom. 5. 3. We glory in Tribulation; and, I rejoyce (says Paul) in reproaches, necessities, and persecutions for Christ, 2 Cor. 12. 10.* So those Worthies, *Heb. 10. 34. who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.* This Christ calls for, *Mat. 5. 22. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, when men persecute you for my sake.* And again, *Count it all joy when you fall into divers afflictions, &c. James 1. 12.* 'Tis admirable to think how some of the Saints, both in former and latter times, have gloried in the Cross of Christ, and even longed for it. *Luther* longed for the honour of Martyrdom, and was ready even to envy those that were called to it, when he was not; writing to some of his acquaintance in Bonds for Christ and the Gospel, he breaks out into this complaint: *O miserable me, who have been first in teaching these things, but last and perhaps never worthy to be a partaker of your Bonds and Fires.* Oh labour for such Grace! We think it much, if we be content to suffer; but we should rejoyce in Sufferings, glory in the Cross, carry our selves under Sufferings for Christ, as
I look-

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looking upon them to be (for so indeed they are) an honour and priviledge unto us.

11. For a Man in a prosperous condition, all things going smoothly with him in the World, to be willing to loose Anchor, and be gone hence to Heaven; yea, for a Man to long, and long earnestly for a dissolution, that he might be with Christ fully, and for ever with him, this is noble Grace. Sirs, take a Man whose mountain of prosperity stands strong, whose paths are as it were strewed with Roses, the Roses of Creature-Contentments, who has all that Heart can wish of this Worlds good, the streams running pleasantly on each hand of him; for such a one in such a condition to long, and long earnestly to be gone to his dear Lord, that so he may be fully like him, and may see him as he is; that he may be eternally in his Presence, swallowed up in the Love, Praises, and Admirations of him, be a perfect partaker of his Life and Image, this is great and glorious Grace. When though a Mans condition in the World be every way such, as that he may well say, *'Tis good to be here :* yet the daily pulse of his Soul

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Soul is that of the Spouse, *Cant.* 8. 14. *Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like a Roe, or young Hart upon the Mountains of Spices*; make haste to fetch me hence to Heaven. This is noble Grace, and that which every one does not come up unto. Indeed when we are in affliction, and our lives are bitter to us, by reason of many and great trials, difficulties and temptations, then many are willing to be gone. But this is so far from noble Grace, that this may be where there is no Grace at all. But when the Sun shines upon our Tabernacle, and sets not; when we live in a Paradise of Earthly Comforts and Contentments; then to pant and long to be gone to be with Christ; then to suspire and breathe after the other World, and with an holy impatiency to look out for it, this is glorious Grace, Grace that carries an heavenly odour and savour with it. Thus I have mentioned some of those more noble and excellent strains of Grace for our imitation, which I would have you labour to come up unto; and the more you come up to these, the more fit you are to live, and the more ready to die.

C H A P. X.

Wherein further Directions are laid down in order to the setting things right, and making all ready for a dying hour.

Seventhly, **W**ould you indeed have all things right and in order, before a dying hour comes? Then be diligent and faithful in the work of God, that Work which God in a particular manner hath given you to do: We have all our work to do, and that given us from God; we have general work, and special work.

First, We have general work to do; the work of our Christian calling, the work of our Salvation, which we are commanded *to work out with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. the work of Faith, and the labour of Love, the work of Mortification, Self-denial and the like. We have also,

Secondly, Special work to do, the work of our particular Stations and places; work that is incumbent upon us, as we stand thus and thus related, being Magistrates, or Ministers, the Masters

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Masters of Families, or the like : For all such Relations bring their work and duty with them ; and this indeed is properly our own work, and this we should be diligent and faithful in, as ever we would be found ready for a dying hour. *Paul* had his work to do, and he was diligent and faithful in the discharge of it ; which gave him comfort, when he came to die. 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand ; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course ; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, &c.* He had been faithful in the discharge of his Work while he lived ; and being now to die, he found the comfort and sweetness of it : Yea, this was that which our Lord himself comforted himself withal, when he was to die, and in the sense of it goes to his Father with boldness for his glory, John 17. 4. *I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do :* Indeed he had a great deal of Work given him by the Father, and he was faithful and punctual in the discharge of it all ; which was a comfort to him, now he was to die : And he

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himself tells us, *that is the blessed Servant, whom when his Lord shall come, shall find so doing ; that is, faithful and diligent in the discharge of his proper Work. Mat. 24. 46.* Truly this is the posture which some (though but a few) are found in ; they make Conscience to discharge the Duty that is incumbent upon them ; they say with their Lord, *I must work the Works of him that sent me, while it is day ; for the night cometh, when no Man can work, John 9. 4.* They see a Night coming, Death coming, Judgment coming, Eternity coming, and accordingly they desire to lay out their whole Souls in the Work of God, to live up to the Laws of Christ in every Relation ; and they look upon that day as lost, wherein they have not done somewhat for God and their own Souls : and how comfortably may such look Death in the face, when it comes ? I have read the Life of an Holy Minister, who was seised upon by Sicknes, which was unto Death, while he was Preaching the Everlasting Gospel ; and lying a few dayes sick ere he died, a fellow-labourer of his, another Holy Minister, coming to visit him, and seeing Death in his face, cried

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cry'd out in some Passion, *O dear Sir, are you going to Heaven from us ?* To whom he replied, *Yes, and I bless God, that my Master found me in his Work.* Truly, might a Man have his choice and option, he would have Death to find him while he is engaged in the Work of God. Oh study your own Work: study the Work and Duty of your Christian Calling: study that Work and Duty which is incumbent upon you in your particular Relations, and beg of God a Heart to be diligent in the Discharge of one and the other.

Eighthly, Would you indeed have all right, and in order in the matters of your Souls, ere a dying hour comes? then be sure to suffer no distance, no estrangements to grow up between God and you; but labour to keep up a constant and intimate acquaintance with him, *Acquaint thy self with God, and be at Peace, Job 22. 21.* The more of an holy intimacy and acquaintance with God we maintain, the more we are at Peace with our selves: and I am sure the more we are at peace in our selves, the more ready we are for a dying hour. Woe and alas for us! How oft do we let
I 4 fall

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fall our converse and communion with God, and suffer sad distances and estrangements to grow up between him and us? And indeed (my Beloved) it is a sad and amazing thing to think how suddenly and imperceptibly distances and estrangements will grow up between God and a Man's Soul : For my own part, should I have heard of it only by the hearing of the Ear, and had not found it by too many sad and woful experiences, I could not have believed how suddenly and imperceptibly distances and estrangements will grow up between God and a Man's Soul, yea, and that after the nearest, liveliest, and most intimate acquaintance and communion with him : which calls upon us to be very watchful and circumspect, as to this thing ; and (my Beloved) as you would die with boldness and comfort, let me advise and perswade you to give all diligence to keep up constant intercourse and acquaintance with God, and watch narrowly against all distances between him and you. Which of us, that knows any thing of the things of God, knows not, that we suffer distances and estrangements to grow up between
God

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God and us? We cannot tell how with any tollerable boldness and comfort, to look him in the Face in a duty, or scarce to think of him with delight, much less shall we be able to look him in the Face with comfort in Death, in case we suffer distances to grow up between him and us: Moreover, take this for a sure rule, That the more you are versed in communion with God, and do maintain an holy intimacy and correspondence with him, the more boldness and comfort you will have when you come to die; then you will be able to say, I am now going to be, and live forever, immediately with that God with whom I have lived with much sweet and intimate communion here; I am now going to converse more fully with him in Heaven, with whom I have enjoyed much sweet converse here on Earth. Should death find a Man under distances and estrangements between God and him, it must necessarily be uncomfortable unto him; but when there is an holy intimacy kept up between God and the Soul, then the Soul need not fear, or be ashamed to look Death and Judgment both in the face: *Little Children*

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dren, saith John, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming, 1 Joh. 2. 28. We are put into Christ by Faith at our first Conversion; and we abide in him by after-acts of Faith and Communion; and this abiding in him is the way to have boldness before him at his coming: therefore mind this, and pray much about this; take heed of distances growing up between God and you, and labour to have those sweet visits, those sweet intercourses of Love, those blessed acts of Communion kept up between God and you, that are wont to be kept up between him and his watchful, close walking Saints. And in order hereunto, take three or four short hints.

First, Look upon and esteem Converse and Communion with God, to be (as indeed it is) your highest happiness, both here, and in Heaven; the highest Happiness Souls are capable of here, is to live in Converse and Communion with God in such wayes as are suitable to this present state; and the highest Happiness Souls are capable of Eternally in Heaven, is to live in the Divine Presence, and to see God's face continually, and to lodge

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lodge for ever in the bosom of his Love ; we may run out to a thousand things, and when we have done all, this will be the highest and indeed the only Happiness of Souls, (*viz.*) to converse with God, and to enjoy Communion with God ; and they that miss of this, will miss of all Happiness for ever : accordingly we should prize it, and press after it, we should account all things as nothing on this side God, and Communion with God in Christ. The Saints of old have done so ; *Many, saith David, will say, who will shew us any good ? but, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us*, Psal. 4. 6. As if he should say, While others are seeking their happiness from carnall and earthly enjoyments, Corn, Wine, and Oyl, the Happiness we desire is thy Love, thy Favour, the beamings out of the Light of thy Countenance upon our Souls. So Psal. 39 7. *Now, Lord, what wait I for ? my Hope is in thee ;* I have done with the streams, as if he should say, and I desire to cleave wholly to the Fountain ; I have done with the Creatures, of which I have formerly been too fond ; and I would now take up
blow my

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my whole rest, solace, and satisfaction in thy self alone: And also, *Psal. 73. 25, 26. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none on Earth I desire in comparison of thee: My heart and my flesh fail-eth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* The same Spirit dwelt and acted in *Austin, All fulness and plenty (says he) which is not my God, is Want and Poverty: And again, elsewhere, Thou, Lord, art my God, my happiness; and unto thee, and after thee, do I breathe and suspire Day and Night.* O (my Beloved) did we indeed prize communion with God more, we should live more in communion with him; and this take for a certain truth, that it will never be well with us indeed, till we see all in God, and account we enjoy all happiness, in enjoying communion with him.

Secondly, In the close of every Day, take a serious view of, and diligently consider what hath passed between God and you, what transactions there have been between God and your Souls that Day: there doth not a Day pass, wherein there do not many things pass between God and his People; and he that would

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would prevent distances and estrangements between God and him, should seriously ponder and lay to heart what hath passed between God and his Soul, what transactions there hath been between God and him that Day. On the one hand, ponder and consider what hath passed from God to you, and what his carriage towards you hath been, what approaches he hath made to you, what intimations of Love, what overtures of communion, what discoveries, of himself and his glory; how far and in what way God hath been dealing with your spirits, convincing, enlightning, quickning, or comforting, of them: What calls he hath given you, what Myrrhe he hath dropped upon the handle of the Lock, what tastes you have had of his Sweetness and Grace, what holy impressions he hath made upon you, and the like. On the other hand, ponder and consider what hath passed from you to God, and what your carriages towards him have been, what acception and entertainment you have given him, making his approaches to you; what value you have put upon his presence, and the intimations of his love;

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Love: how far you have embraced and improved the overtures he made you of farther Communion with him; what awe there hath been upon you of his Holiness, and his All-seeing Eye; what out goings of Heart there have been found within you after him; what breathings of Love, what holy Longings and Desires, what springings and workings of Spiritual Joy, and delight of Soul to him, and in him; what place he hath had in your thoughts and contemplations; how far you have lived to him, and upon him; wherein you may have either greived or delighted his Spirit, and the like. Thus in the close of every day ponder and consider what hath passed between God and you, and accordingly deport and demean your selves before him. Wherein you have failed, or been defective in any thing in order to keeping up Communion between God and you, be humbled, and set all right by Faith and Prayer; adore God in his Acts of Grace and Condescension (as to be sure you will find cause to do) and loath your selves, for any acts of Sin or unkindness, undutifulness or disrespect that you have been guilty of.

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of towards God: O this would be a blessed course indeed, to prevent distances and estrangements between God and you. This *David* calls *a communing with his own Heart*: and enjoyns it as a Duty of the highest importance; *Stand in awe and sin not; commune with your Hearts, and be still*, Psal. 4. 4. It is what he lived in the practise of, *Psalms. 77. 6.* (if he were the Author of that Psalm) *I communed with my own Heart, and my Spirit made diligent search.* O be punctual in this Work.

Thirdly, Be much conversant, and that with all Spiritual diligence, in the ways and duties of Communion; those ways and duties wherein God is wont to meet his People, and maintain Converse and Communion with them; and in all of them wait for God and his approaches to you: there are those which we may call ways and duties of Communion; ways and duties wherein God and his People do hold converse with each other, wherein God visits and communicates himself unto his People, and wherein his People may be said to visit God, and make out after God; and these are the use of the Word and Sacraments, the

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the exercise of Prayer, Meditation, Self-examination, and the like : Now, as ever you would prevent the growing up of distances and estrangements between God and you, see that you are much conversant in these, and that with a holy and spiritual diligence, waiting for God, and the manifestations of God to your souls in them ; these are the galleries wherein Christ and his People do take sweet turns together ; the green Beds wherein they lie down in the bosom of each others Love : Therefore keep up a constant and diligent attendance on God in these. And in all your attendances on him, look after converse with him, let it be your solemn aim to converse with him, and see his Face, to have a visit, a smile, a descent of Love from him. I do suppose you to be such as do, and will attend on publick Ordinances, and wait for God there, as they waited for the Spirit at *Jerusalem* : That only then which I would press you to, in this present case, shall be to be much conversant in Prayer and Meditation between God and your own Souls ; in these two great duties of Communion with God, secret Prayer and Meditation :

on :

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on: Oh the loss as to communion with God, that we expose our selves unto, by being no more in Prayer and holy Meditation! The holy Ones of Old, and those that have been Men of the highest communion with God, have also been Men of much Prayer, and great Meditation; as I might instance in *David*, and *Daniel*, and others: And indeed, their communion with God came in, and was kept up this way. God (you know) hath told us, *The Prayer of the upright is his delight*, Prov. 15. 8. And Christ bespeaks the Prayer of his Spouse, as most pleasing and delightful to him, Cant. 2. 14. *O my Dove! thou art in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the Stairs: Let me see thy countenance, and hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely*: As if he should say, Approach to me in secret Prayer, I will assure thee it will be most sweet and pleasant to me. And as he thus delights in the Prayers of his People, so he will surely delight them in their Prayers with the visits of his Love, and communications of his Grace, the beamings out of his Glory to, and upon their Souls: He hath promised to *make them*
joy-

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joyful in the house of Prayer; yea, he hath
promised to perform the whole Grace
of the new-Covenant in answer to their
Prayers, Ezek. 36. 37. Oh the great
things God doth for his People, and
the sweet Communion that is kept up
between him and them, in a way of
Prayer! I remember a saying of one,
He that is not much in Prayer, will never
be a man of much excellency: And I may
as truly say, he that is not much in
Prayer, is never like to be a Man of
much communion with God. And so
for Meditation: O how sweet, how
Heaven-like a Duty is that! Oh how
much of God is let out many times to
the Souls of his People herein! David
experienced this, Psal. 63. 5, 6. My Soul
shall be satisfied as with Marrow and fat-
ness, and my Mouth shall praise thee with
joyful Lips; when I remember thee upon
my Bed, and meditate on thee in the night-
watches. While he was conversant in
this duty of Meditation, his Soul was
filled with joy and satisfaction, as with
marrow and fatness. Again, saith he, my
meditation of thee shall be sweet, Psal. 104.
34. Oh be much and frequent with God
in these ways and duties of Communion.
Fourthly,

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Fourthly, Give Christ his due Place and Honour, in all your makings out after Communion with God. *Joseph* told his Brethren, *they should not see his face, unless they brought their Brother Benjamin with them*: and truly you are not like to see the Face of God, in any of the fore-mentioned Ways and Duties, unless you bring Christ with you, and give him his due Place and Honour therein; that is to say, unless you eye him, and act Faith upon him, as the only way and medium of Communion with God: Christ bespeaks this at our hands, while he tells us, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no Man cometh to the Father, but by me*, John 14. 6. and by his Blood it is, that we have a way opened to us into the Holy of Holies, access for our Persons and Prayers into the Divine Presence, *Heb. 10. 19, 20.* yea, not only as he purchased a Liberty, and opened a way for us to approach into the Presence of God; but having done this, by his Mediation and Intercession it is that any of us come to God: hence he is said to *save to the very uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make Intercession for us,*

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us, Heb. 7. 25. Indeed, were it not for Christ, none of us could ever hope to see the Face of God, and live ; none of us could ever hope to see one smile of God's Face, one embrace of his Bosom, any the least descent and emanation of love from him : Were it not for Christ, when we come unto God, we should find him to be a consuming Fire, and when he and our souls did meet, it would be as the meeting of devouring Fire, and withered Stubble : In a word, all Communications of Grace and Love from God to us, are by and through Christ ; and all the Love, the Duty, the Homage we tender to God, must be all tendred to him by and through Christ, if ever we find acceptance with him : Have Christ therefore in your eye in all your approaches unto God, as him *by whom we have access unto the Father*, Ephes. 2. 18. Let the real language of your souls be, If I have any one smile from God, it must be upon the account of Christ ; if he sheweth himself pacified towards me, it must be through his Blood ; if he gives out any Grace, any Favour, any Blessing to me, it will be upon the sole account of his Mediation ; if ever either my
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person, or services be accepted of the Lord, it must be in and through this Mediator: Moreover, how great soever the distance between God and my Soul is, yet Christ can bring me nigh unto him; and however unworthy of, or unsuitable to communion with God I am in my self, yet such is his well pleasedness in Christ, that well-beloved Son of his, that I will hope through him to find Grace in his sight, and to be lodged in the bosom of his Love. Thus put all the Honour upon Christ, that is due to him in this business; this is what is pleasing to the Father: And the more you thus Honour him, the fuller and more constant will your converse and communion with God be.

Ninthly, Would you indeed have all right, and in order for a dying hour? Would you be ready for that last and great work? Then live wholly and constantly upon Christ, and his Righteousness, for your justification and acceptation with God, both living and dying. The more we live out of our selves upon Christ and his Righteousness, for justification, and acceptation with God, the more ready posture we are in for a dying

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ing hour : this indeed is the main thing, and when we have done all that ever we can, to deck and adorn our selves with Grace, and gracious Dispositions, still we must live out of our selves, and out of all those Ornaments, upon the naked Righteousness of Christ, for Justification and Salvation. This is that which the Scripture calls the Readiness of the Lamb's Wife, *Rev. 19. 7, 8. Let us be glad, and rejoice, for the Marriage of the Lamb is come, and his Wife hath made her self ready.* And wherein that Readiness lay, the next words will tell you ; *To her was granted to be cloathed with fine Linen, clean and white : which fine Linen is the Righteousness of the Saints ; that is, the Righteousness of Christ imputed to the Saints through believing : This is the best Robe, mentioned Luke 15. 22. a Robe indeed, which covers all our nakedness, that beautifies and adorns us, and renders us most amiable in God's Eye.* Whatsoever spots and blemishes, what-ever failings or defects may be upon us, yet these are not seen, while God looks upon us as cloathed with the Righteousness of his Son ; and we by Faith do live upon that Righteousness,

as

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as the sole matter of our Justification and acceptance with him: and let me tell you, the more clear and distinct the actings of our Faith are, in carrying us out of our selves, and all self-righteousness, and relying wholly on Christ and his Righteousness, the more ready and comfortable posture we are in for a dying hour: This was the great thing *Paul* coveted and pressed after to the very last, and which he accounted all things but Dung for: *Phil. 3. 8, 9.* *I count all things but Dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is by the Law, but the Righteousness of Faith, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.* He dreaded the thoughts of being found in any thing of his own; he trembled to think of standing upon his own bottom, the bottom of his own worth and righteousness, when he should come to die; and he cleaved intirely unto, and relied wholly upon Christ and his most perfect Righteousness. Oh let me tell you, *Paul* had as much and perhaps more to have rested upon, than ten thousand of us; for Gifts, for Graces, for Priviledges, for Services, for Successes,
for

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for sufferings for Christ, he went beyond any meer Man that ever lived; and *Chrysostom* observes of him, That he feared nothing but Sin; to displease God, and to dishonour him, was the onely thing that was terrible to him; and the Scripture gives a large and frequent account of his other attainments: But still he goeth out of all, and his language is, None but Christ, none but Christ; not but that also he presseth after the greatest eminency and exactness in Holiness, as you find in the following Verses of this third to the *Philippians*: And indeed, this is the true Spirit of the Gospel, to press after the greatest eminency and exactness in Holiness: to covet to attain, if possible, unto Angelical Holiness: And yet under, and after all, to live singly and entirely on a naked Christ, and his Righteousness, for justification and acceptation with God; and the more you come to, and live in this Spirit, the more ready you are for Death and a blessed Eternity: This was a great part of the ground of the Churches rejoycing, *Isa. 61. 10. I will greatly rejoyce in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me*

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me with the Garments of Salvation, and bath covered me with the Robe of Righteousness: Which Chrysostom, and others both Ancient and Modern, interpret of the Righteousness of Christ: And indeed no greater ground of rejoycing to a Man or Woman, whether Living or Dying, than to be cloathed with the Robe of the Righteousness of Christ: I shall only put you in mind of a saying I have heard from a holy Man, the day before he died: My Friends (saith he, speaking to my self and others) I have walked with God these thirty years, and have enjoyed a good measure of the assurance of his love: but now that I am come to die, I do not place my comfort on any of all these, but on the infinite satisfaction of Jesus Christ. Oh there, there, when we have done all, we must lay the weight and stress of our Souls, Comfort, Salvation, and all: And therefore be sure you live out of your selves upon Christ. It is a great saying Luther hath to this purpose, Lord Jesus (saith he) thou art my Righteousness, and I am thy sin: Thou tookest mine, (meaning his sin) and thou gavest me thine, (meaning his Righteousness): Thou tookest that which

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thou

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thou wast not, and thou gavest me that which I was not; intending the exchange that Christ had made with him, giving him his Righteousness for his Sin: Oh let this be the language of our Souls to Christ; so shall we be found ready when a dying hour comes.

Tenthly; Would you indeed die with comfort? Then beg God to stand by you, and give you actual grace in a dying hour; and make it one of your great works to treasure up many Prayers for this before-hand. When you have done all, should God withdraw his presence, and the influences of his Grace and Love from you, when you come to die, Death would be in a great measure uncomfortable to you: But if God will be with you, if God will stand by you, if he will vouchsafe you the influences and communications of his Grace in a dying hour, then how will your Souls triumph over Death? This indeed will sweeten Death. They are great words of David, in Psal. 33. 4. *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: Having the presence of God with him, he was not, he would not be afraid,*
even

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even in the very valley of the shadow of Death. Truly without the presence of God, we cannot live comfortably. Whatsoever our attainments in Grace have been, yet if God withdraw his presence from us, we can do nothing, we can bear nothing, we cannot perform the least duty, we cannot resist the least temptation, we cannot grapple with the least corruption, nor carry through, as we ought, the least difficulty: Much less shall we be able to die with comfort, if God withdraw: therefore, I say, beg God to stand by you in a dying hour: Let it be your daily prayer to God,

First, That he would be with you in the difficulties of Life.

Secondly, That he would not leave you in the conflicts and agonies of Death. And indeed we should not pass that day wherein we do not treasure up one prayer for this before-hand; and thus doing, God will not leave us, God will not fail us in that last and great difficulty; at least he will not leave us in point of Grace: Our Lord himself was left in the agonies of Death by the Father, in point of Comfort, which put him to that out-cry, *Why hast thou for-*

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saken me? But he was not left by him in point of Grace, still a Spirit of Faith and Holiness acted him; and therefore though forsaken, he cries out, *My God, my God*: If possibly, in conformity to our Head, we should be left in that hour in point of comfort, yet if we carry our selves as we ought, we shall not be left in point of Grace; and if we be not left in point of Grace, all will do well, though not so sweet and joyous with us as otherwise it would be. And thus I have given you these more particular directions, in order to a preparation for a dying hour; which if you live up to, you may not only live above the fear of death, but also in the joyful expectation thereof daily.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Being a Consolatory Conclusion of the whole Discourse, containing Encouragements against the fear of Death, unto all such as are found in the practice of the foregoing Directions.

NOW for a Conclusion of the whole matter, upon all that hath been declared. Soul, let me ask thee one Question: Dost thou indeed see thy particular concern in this business? So see it, as really to make it thy great work and sollicitude while living, to set all things right, and make all things ready for a dying hour? Some there are that are so happy as so to do; and art thou one of them? Then why shouldst thou fear death? yea, why shouldst thou not exult, and thy heart leap within thee in the sight and thoughts of its approach? True, it is a dark entry, but it leads to a fair and stately Palace, even the Fathers House: 'Tis a rough and difficult passage, but it sets thee safe on shore in a large and fat Land: true, it carries with it somewhat a black, lowring, and ghastly aspect to Nature; and Na-

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true may at first possibly be startled, and recoil at the sight of it; but open the eye of thy Faith, and behold it in the glass of the Gospel, view it in the death of thy Lord and Head, and it will not appear half so terrible; yea, thou wilt find it to be not so much an Enemy as a Friend; not as a King of Terrors, but rather as a King of Comforts; not as an object to be dreaded and trembled at, but rather to be rejoiced in, and triumphed over by thee: It will appear to be not loss, but gain: *For me to die is gain*, says Paul, *Phil. 1. 21.* Yea, it will be thy great gain, 'twill be the period of all thy misery, and the perfecting of all thy happiness; and the truth is, we are never perfectly happy, till death comes. But for thy further encouragement, I shall in a few particulars shew you what Death (come when it will) doth and will do for such as make all ready for its coming.

1. Death, when ever it comes, will translate thee, thou ready Soul, from Earth to Heaven, from a strange Land to thine own Home, and Fathers House; And will not this be a kindness? As for this world, what is it to the poor-Saints but

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but a strange Land? 'Tis Heaven is their Home and Country. Hence, they have confest, and do confess themselves to be *Pilgrims and Strangers upon Earth*, Heb. 11. 13. And the Psalmist in the words immediately foregoing my Text, Psal. 39. 12. shewns it to God, *I am a Sojournner and a Stranger here*: Yea, this World is not only a strange Land, but a waste howling wilderness to such, wherein they live among wild Beasts, Lions, Bears, Wolves, Tygers, and the like: Lusts within, and Devils without, ready daily to devour them: but now when Death comes, that carries them off from this strange Land, this waste howling wilderness, to their own home and country, which is Heaven; yea, to their Fathers House, there to live with him; to enjoy his presence, and to adore his Grace. *We know*, says the Apostle, *that when our earthly house of this Tabernacle* (speaking of the Body) *shall be dissolved, we have a building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*, 2 Cor. 5. 1. And you know how Christ speaks to his Disciples, John 14. 2. *In my Fathers house are many Mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, and thi-*

ther does death carry you when it comes, Oh sweet! Oh my Beloved, to go home, to go to our Fathers House, and to possess our Mansion there, that Mansion which our dear Lord and Head is gone before to prepare for us, how sweet is this to think of? And how many deaths may it sweeten? Suppose one of you were some thousand miles distant from your Home, Country, and Comforts, and you were in a waste howling Wilderness, among Lions and Bears, ready to devour you, a wide Sea also being between home and you; and suppose withal, that a Ship should come and take you into her, and in a short time set you down in your own Country, and among all your Friends and Comforts, would not this be a kindness? Why this is your case here, O ye preparing Souls, and this is the kindness Death does for you, when it comes: while here, you are ten thousand miles distant from your Home and Country, your Friends and Comforts, and in a waste howling Wilderness; but Death that swift Sailer comes, and in a moment sets you down in Heaven, your Home and Country, O how welcome should it then be to you?

2. Death,

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2. Death, when ever it comes, will carry thee from Trouble to Rest, from a tempestuous Sea to a quiet Haven, there to lie at an eternal Anchor in the Bosom of thy sweet Lord. This World ever was, and (for any thing I know) ever will be a place of Trouble to the People of God : Sure I am, Christ hath told us, *In the World you shall have Tribulation,* John 16. 33. And who of us does not find it made good? This World is a tempestuous Sea, wherein the Waves lift up themselves, and the poor Saints are *afflicted and tossed with tempests*, and oftentimes *not comforted*, Isa. 54. 11. We read in *Jonah* 1. 13. that *the Sea wrought, and was tempestuous, and the Mariners were fain to row hard to get the Ship to shore.* And truly, thus 'tis often in the case in hand, the Sea of this World is tempestuous, it works, and the poor Saints are fain to row hard to get safe to shore; yea, as we read, *Acts* 27. 14. That an *Euroclydon*, a tempestuous East-wind arose, and beat upon Paul, and others in the Ship with him, which was ready to break all in pieces: So truly the Saints in this World do meet with *Euroclydons*, tempestuous Winds, not a

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few,

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few, which beat upon them, and are ready to split all, and sink all; but now, when death comes, those storms are all made a calm, and they (I mean the Saints) are brought into the desired Haven: Death sets them at rest; 'tis indeed their dismissal to rest; *There* (says *Job*, speaking of the Grave) *the weary are at rest*, Job 3. 17. Death sends the Body to rest, it frees it from all sensible Sufferings: When Death comes, thy weak Body, thy sick Body, thy pained Body, thy consumptive Body, shall have its dismissal to rest; and Death sends the Soul to rest, that rests in God, and with God: *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, henceforth they rest from their labours*, Rev. 14. 13. And you have, I think, both together in one Scripture, *Isa. 57. 2.* where speaking of the Righteous, 'tis said, *They shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds.* Hence we read, that *there remaineth a rest to the People of God*, Heb. 4. 9. Indeed it remains, 'tis not here; but when death comes, that sets them down in this remaining rest. Oh what a kindness must this be? Rest! O how sweet is rest? how desirable is rest? and rest too
after

after long and hard labour and trouble? How sweet is rest to the Labouring-man, that hath wrought hard all the day? How sweet is rest to the weary Traveller, that hath gone a long and dirty Journey? How sweet is rest to the solicitous Mariner, and how welcome is the Harbour to him, especially after having been long tost and beaten with storms and tempests? And how sweet will rest be to the poor, troubled, tempted, labouring, travelling Saint, whose whole life has been little else but trouble, labour, and fore travel; who here could scarce all his days find a resting place for the sole of his foot, the World as to him being covered with a deluge?

3. Death, when ever it comes, will turn your Conflicts into Victory; this *Aceldama*, or Field of Blood (for such is this world) into a Mount of Triumph, and a Throne of Glory. What is this world but an *Aceldama*, a Field of blood, to the poor Saints? Sure I am, this life is little else but a perpetual war and conflict with Lusts, with Devils, with Afflictions, and with Temptations; hence 'tis call'd *a fight, a warfare*, and the like :
and

and the enemies which they in this warfare have to grapple with, are formidable enemies: *We wrestle not*, says the Apostle, *with flesh and blood, but with Principalities and Powers, and spiritual wickednesses*, Eph. 6. 12, 13. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, that is, with Men, or any thing that is frail and weak; no, we have more potent and formidable enemies to deal withal; we wrestle and conflict with Devils, who are potent, subtile, and indefatigable. *Enemies* (as Calvin observes upon the place) *which wound before they appear, and kill before they are seen; Enemies, which deal not only by force and power, but who are dreadfully crafty and subtile; yea enemies which have fiery darts to cast at us*, as afterwards he speaks. And for my own part, I think it were well for us, over what it is, if these were the worst enemies we had to grapple and conflict withal; but there are Legions of Lusts within (which I look upon to be worse enemies) which we do and must wrestle with (intestine enemies are in many respects the worst) these war against our souls, 1 Pet. 2. 11. and were it not for these, all the Devils in Hell could

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could do us no hurt. Thus this life is to the Saints a warfare, a conflict; and O the wounds, the bruises, the bloodshed which they are exposed unto in this War! Now their Peace, and then their Grace; now their Comforts, and then their Consciences are sorely wounded, and they lie a bleeding for Days, and Weeks, and Months together; yea, sometimes like him that was travelling from *Jerusalem* to *Jericho*, they are wounded and left half dead, and did not the good *Samaritan* pass by, take compassion on them, and pour in of his Wine and Oyl, his Blood and Spirit, into their wounds, they would soon be wholly dead: Well, but now when Death comes, that puts an end to this War, and sets them all down upon a Throne of Triumph: *To him that overcometh* (says Christ) *will I grant to sit with me upon my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his Throne, Rev. 3. 21.* When Death comes, then you begin an eternal Triumph with Christ; then the Palm will be put into your hands, and you shall triumphingly cry, Victory, Victory, for ever. O how sweet will this be!
how

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how sweet is the Victory to a Souldier, that has been long and hard put to it in the Battel? And indeed, the harder the Battel, the more glorious the Triumph.

'Tis a sweet and a great saying which I have read in *Aug.* to this purpose, *The Conqueror*, saith he, *triumphs; and unless he had fought, he had never conquered, and by how much the greater his danger and difficulty was in the Battel, by so much the greater is his joy in the Triumph.* O

Sirs, not only will death set you upon a mount of Triumph; but know for your encouragement, the sharper your conflicts and warfare have been here, the more glorious will your triumph be, when Death shall set you upon the Throne.

4. Death, when ever it comes, will change your bondage into liberty, your spiritual thraldom into glorious freedom; And is not this a kindness? Poor soul, one thing which here thou bleedest and groanest under, is that spiritual bondage and thraldom which thou liest under: And indeed, this World is no other than a Prison, a Dungeon, an house of Bondage to thee, the Land of thy Captivity: Here thou liest in Chains and

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and Fetters, the Chains and Fetters of Sin and Guilt; yea, and the Iron sometimes enters into thy spirit. Hence we read of *the bondage of Corruption*, which indeed is the worst bondage in the World, a worse bondage ten thousand times than that which *Israel* groaned and sighed under in *Egypt*, who yet were made to serve with rigour, and whose lives were made bitter with hard bondage, *Exod. i. 13, 14.* Truly, this lust and the other lust, this corruption and the other corruption, are as so many *Egyptians*, cruel Task-masters, which make thee serve with rigour, and thy life bitter to thee with hard bondage: And oh how dost thou groan and sigh under the bondage of a proud, dead, hard, carnal, unbelieving heart, an heart bent to back-sliding from God? And indeed, who that is sensible of it, can but groan under it? This drew that heavy groan from *Paul*, and bitter out-cry, *Rom. 7. 24. O wretched man that I am!* says he: Why *Paul*, what is the matter? Oh, says he, *I find a law in my members warring against the law in my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death.* I am by sin brought into captivity

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captivity to sin, and I have a body of sin and death lying heavy upon me, heavier than a Mountain of Brass, or Iron ; And who can but groan ? And as 'twas with him, so 'tis with all the Saints in their measure : Well, but when death comes, Sirs, that will turn all this your bondage into liberty, yea, into *the glorious liberty of the Children of God*, Rom. 8. 21. that will turn again this your captivity : And oh how sweet will that be ? You have some little tastes of this liberty here ; for *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*, 2 Cor. 3. 7. and the tastes of it are sweet, very sweet ; But O how sweet will the full enjoyment on't be ? *Paul* breaks out into praises in the faith of it before-hand, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ*, Rom. 7. 25. O Soul, how should this make thee long for Death ? Can a Prison, can an House of Bondage, can a state of Thralldom be pleasant to thee ? Canst thou be well-pleased to lie in chains and fetters of Sin and Guilt ? Shouldst thou not rather welcome that which alone would work thy deliverance ?

5. Death, when ever it comes, will be the death of all your Sins, and the perfection.

perfection of all your graces? and will not that be a kindness? Poor Saint, how dost thou here bleed and groan under the sense of the life and vigour of thy sins on the one hand, and of the weakness and imperfection of thy graces on the other hand? Yea, how great are the conflicts and holy contentions of thy spirit, to kill and bring down the one, and to quicken and perfect the other? How dost thou, with the holy Apostle of old, forgetting those things which are behind, follow after, that thou mayst apprehend that for which also thou art apprehended of Christ Jesus, pressing towards the mark, &c. Phil. 3. 12, 13, 14. O the watchings, the warrings, the wrestlings of thy Soul for more Grace, more Holiness, more Victory over, and cleansing from Sin! Oh the many prayers and tears, sighs and groans that thou pourest out between God and thy soul, in order hereunto? These things are the business of thy life; yea, and after all, sin is still strong and lively, and Grace is still weak and imperfect; the sense of which breaks thy heart almost, and makes thee go mourning all the Day long: What daily cleansing thy self, and

and yet still unclean? Daily perfecting Holiness, yet still imperfect? Oh how sad is this! Well, but soul, when death comes, things will be strangely alter'd with thee; that will do that for thee in one moment, which thou by a whole life of Prayers, Tears, Faith, Watching, Warring, Labouring, couldst not do; 'twill make thee perfect: Hence those above are said to be so, *The spirits of just Men made perfect*, Heb. 12. 23. *Then all that is imperfect will be done away, and that which is perfect shall come*, 1 Cor. 13. 10. perfect Grace, perfect Holiness: Now there is much lacking in thy faith, thy love, thy obedience, thy humility, thy heavenliness, thy joy and delight in God; but Death, when it comes, will make up all in a moment. Yea, now thou art stained and defiled with sin, and this lust and the other lust stirs, and works, and wars within thee; but when Death comes, that will purge away all: Death is the Saints only perfect cleanser through Christ. Indeed 'tis said of wicked Men and Hypocrites, that *their iniquities shall lie down with them in the dust*, Job 20. 11. which is a dreadful word indeed: Death does not kill
their

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their sins; no, they live in the grave; they go with them into the other World, and will there live in them for ever; which will be a great part of their torment. 'Twill be indeed (however they may now think of it) the one half of Hell: For what is Hell, but sin at the highest, and wrath at the hottest? But though it be thus with wicked ones, yet 'tis otherwise with the Saints; Death, through the Grace of Christ, will for ever put a period to your sin, and perfect your graces: Oh sweet! who would not welcome Death? —

6. Death, when ever it comes, will set thee above all afflictive distances between God, Christ, the Comforter, and thee, and will set down thy soul in the full, constant, and immediate vision and fruition of all for ever: And is not this sweet? Poor Saint, here thou complainest, that *God is a stranger to thee, and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry but for a night*: Thou hast only now and then a short visit from him, Jer. 14. 8. Thou complainest that *thy Beloved withdraws himself, and is gone*, Cant. 5. 6. Thou complainest that *the Comforter that should relieve thy soul* is

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is far from thee, Lam. 1. 18. thou complaineſt of many ſad and woful diſtances from God, and of the lowneſs of thy communion, and well thou mayſt ; for indeed , how little a portion is there here ſeen, or enjoyed of him by thee ? Well, but when Death comes, that will liſt thee above all thoſe diſtances between God and thee, Chriſt and thee, and ſet thee down in the full, conſtant, and immediate viſion and fruition of him for ever ; the thoughts of which made Paul, and others, to deſire to be gone, and to chuſe Death rather than Life. 2 Cor. 7. 6, 7, 8. We are confident (ſays he) knowing that whiſt we are at Home in the Body, we are abſent from the Lord : For we walk by Faith, not by ſight : We are confident, I ſay, and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and to be preſent with the Lord. Pray obſerve, Paul enjoyed as much of God and Chriſt here, as moſt did ; and yet all that communion he enjoyed here, he accounted as no communion, to that which he ſhould enjoy after death ; While we are preſent in the body, ſays he, that is, while we live in this World, we are abſent from the Lord, abſent from God and Chriſt, our
com-

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communion here is but distance and estrangement, so low and unconstant is it, in comparison of what we know we shall enjoy after death; and therefore, says he, we had rather be absent from the body, We had rather be gone hence, and be present with the Lord: Death will bring us to anotherghes presence and enjoyment of God and Christ, than here we shall ever be able to reach unto. Alas! all we enjoy of God and Christ here, is but as an earnest; so the Apostle speaks in the Verse foregoing: *He that hath wrought us for this self-same thing, is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit*: But when Death comes, we shall enjoy the full Inheritance: all we enjoy here is but as the First fruits; *We that have the first-fruits of the Spirit*, says the Apostle, *Rom. 8. 23.* but when death comes, we shall have the full Vintage, full incomes of Love, full manifestations of Light, and Life, and Glory; *fulness of joy and pleasure in the Divine Presence, Psal. 16. 11.* full embraces in Christ's Bosom, full views of his Face, full visions of his Glory. Death, when it comes, will bring us to the Beatifical Vision, which is all good and happiness
in

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in one; *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*, Mat. 5. 8. They do see God now, they see him by Faith, and those sights of him are sweet, glorious, soul-ravishing, and transforming sights: But after Death they shall have other sights of him, such sights of him as will even infinitely surpass all that ever they had, or were capable of here. Here they see him but through a glass darkly; that is, they have but low, obscure, mediate sights of him, they see and enjoy but little of him; but when Death comes, then they shall see him face to face, that is, fully, clearly, immediately, 1 Cor. 12. 12. The sum is, as a learned Man gives it us, that in this life we have but low and slender sights and enjoyments of God, in comparison of what we shall see, know, and enjoy of him in eternal life, Glas. Rhet. Here they see but his back-parts, as God said to Moses; but when death comes, they shall see his Face, that is, his Glory: Here they see him but negatively, as it were, what he is not; but then they shall see him as he is, 1 John 3. 2. *We shall see him as he is*, in all his glorious Excellencies and Perfections. In short, they shall then have such sights and enjoyments of God and

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and Christ, as shall eternally fill, delight, solace, satisfy, and set at rest their souls for ever; such sights and enjoyments as shall so solace and satisfy them, as that there shall not be room for the least title or ~~lots~~ of a desire for ever; yea, such sights and enjoyments as shall so satisfy them, as to leave them under an utter impossibility of ever turning aside from them to any thing else, and so an eternal impossibility of sinning. Oh how sweet must this be! and indeed the School-men I find, and others from them, give this as one reason, why the Saints in Heaven are impeccable, because the sight and enjoyment they have of God there, is so full and satisfying, as that they cannot turn aside to any thing else. O welcome death that brings us to those sights, those enjoyments of God, the chief Good. Once more:

7. Death, when ever it comes, will bring you to, and set you down in the enjoyment of an eternal Sabbath: And oh how sweet is this! *There remaineth a Rest* (the word is, *a Sabbath, or Sabbatism*) *to the People of God*, Heb. 4. 9. Ay, but when shall they enjoy it? Why truly, when death comes, that will enter them

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them upon it: Immediately, upon the night of death, dawns the eternal Sabbath. True, the Saints enjoy a Sabbath here, and the Sabbath to them is the sweetest and aimablest day in all the week, 'tis a Day of joy and holy feasting to their souls; and oh how many times do your souls long for it? but alas these Sabbaths have an end: but the Sabbath death will set them down in, will be an eternal Sabbath, and an eternal Sabbath wherein they shall be employed in the highest acts of Worship and Adoration, even Love, Praise, Admiration, and Halleluja's for ever; wherein there will be no weariness, no faintness; wherein there shall be no intermission, no going to Duties, and break off again, as here we do; but a whole Eternity shall be employed in acts of Divine Worship and Adoration; wherein there shall be no deadness, no dulness, no spiritual indispositions, no unsuitableness in us to those high and holy Exercises which this Sabbath will be fill'd with; but our Souls shall be perfectly suited to, and fitted for those glorious employs; wherein not a few only, and those some Saints and some Sinners, some good and some

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some bad, shall joyn together in acts of worship; but an innumerable company both of Saints and Angels, and these all perfectly holy, *Heb. 12. 22, 23, 24.* Oh how sweet and glorious will this be! 'Tis a great saying which I have read in a worthy Divine, *Sabbaths here are comfortable*, says he, *and we have tasted some sweet, some comfort in some Sabbaths;* but take all the Comfort that ever you had in all the Sabbaths you have enjoyed here, and all will be nothing to the comforts and sweetness of the *Eternal Sabbath.* Alas! the perpetual Sabbath that shall be hereafter, that will be the Accomplishment of all these Sabbaths; how sweet then must that be! Oh ye Saints of God, lift up your Heads, Death will set you down in this Sabbath. How have some of us longed sometimes for the coming of the Sabbath! and how have we grieved when it has been gone! Well, but when Death comes, that will bring you to a Sabbath that shall never end. 'Tis a sweet saying of *Austin*, *There* (says he, speaking of Heaven) *is the great Sabbath, a Sabbath that hath no evening, no end, in which we shall rest and behold, behold and love, love and praise for ever.*

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Oh, blessed be God for this Sabbath: and blessed be God that Death, when it comes, shall bring us to this Sabbath. Well, then, fear not Death, dread not Death, but be found diligent and faithful in the use of the helps prescribed for the preparing of your Souls for it: and then 'twill greatly befriended you when ever it comes, and you may exult and rejoyce in it.

I should now conclude, but I must first beg, all that read this plain Discourse, deeply and frequently to consider and contemplate these things.

1. Every day seriously consider and contemplate the exceeding worth of your Souls, and the great things they are capable of. 'Tis sad to think what low Thoughts the most of Men have of their Souls; they are content to sell their Souls, to lose their Souls, to damn their Souls, and all for a Lust, for a little of this World, a little carnal sensual Pleasure and Delight here, which is but for a moment. That rebuke which *Austin* gave one, is due to the most; *How comes it to pass*, says he, *that among all thy good things thou wilt let nothing be in an ill case but thy self, thy Soul?* Truly the
the

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man observes, so the immortality of the Soul is here asserted. Besides, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, with the rest of the good old Patriarchs, and Servants of God, who died long since, are notwithstanding living still, so Christ saith, you know, *Mat. 22. 32.* that is, their souls live. As indeed do the souls of all that are gone hence; their souls all live either in happiness or misery; with God or Devils, and so must thine and mine, Sinner. When our Body shall be eaten by the worms, our Souls will live either in Heaven or Hell. O think of this, daily contemplate and say, I have a soul within me that must live for ever, and that as filled with even an infinite happiness or misery. I have a soul within me that is capable of unspeakable Joys, or unponceivable Torments; and in the one or the other it will, it must live for ever. why then am I not more concerned for it.

2. Seriously contemplate, and daily keep your Spirits on the thoughts of the wonderful weight and importance of Eternity, the greatness of the concern of the other World. O Eternity, Eternity! O vast, great, boundless Eternity!

how shall I do to speak of thee, and how are my Thoughts lost, and my Spirit overwhelmed, when I set my self to contemplate, how great, how weighty a thing thou art? an endless, boundless, bottomless state; a state that admits of neither change, pause, or period for ever; a state of unconceivable Happiness or Misery: Happiness in the enjoyment, or Misery in the loss of, and banishment from God and Christ for ever; Happiness in the fruition of infinite love, or Misery in the revelation of infinite wrath? one of which every Soul must be the object of for ever. Eternity! such is the weight of it in it self, that indeed we know not how to conceive of it, every thing but Eternity has an end, a last: so innumerable as the Stars of Heaven are, yet there is a last Star and the number of them has an end, though we cannot reach it: so innumerable as the Sands on the Sea shore are, yet there is a last Sand, and the number of them has an end, could we reach to it: so numerous as the piles of Grass, which are now, and from the Creation of the World have been, and to the end of the World shall be, are, yet there is an end of

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of the number of them, could we reach it, there is a last pile, a last spire of Grass: so innumerable as the grains of Corn, in all the Harvests that ever were, or shall be, are, yet the number of them has an end, though we cannot reach it, and there is a last grain: so innumerable as all the drops of Rain that ever did fall, or shall fall upon the Earth, from the Creation to the end of the World, are, yet still there is a last drop; yea, and that though all the drops contained in the wide and deep Sea be added thereunto: so innumerable as the Children of Men have been, are, and shall be, to the end of all things: so innumerable as all the Hairs of the Head of them all have been, are, and will be: so innumerable as all the thoughts of the Hearts of all throughout all Ages have been, are, and will be: so innumerable as all the Brutes and Animals, which both the Earth and the Sea have brought forth, do and will bring forth, are and will be, yet still the number of them has an end, could we reach it, and there is a last Man, a last Hair, a last Thought, a last Animal: should all the vast Body of the Heavens, which our eyes behold, be full written

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with figures by the hand of an Angel;
yet the number of those figures would
have an end; and there would be a last
figure: but as for Eternity, that has no
end, no last. Could all those vast numbers
presented be put together into one,
who could in the least compute of the
thousand thousand part of it? yet all
this were nothing to Eternity, no not
the thousand thousand part of it. Thus
Eternity is unconceivably weighty in it
self, and 'tis Eternity indeed that puts
weight into all other things: 'tis Eternity
that puts weight into the future Judg-
ment. What were that Judgment? but
that 'tis Eternal Judgment? *Heb. 6. 2.* 'Tis
Eternity that puts weight indeed into
the happiness and joys of Heaven: what
were that happiness, and those joys, were
they not eternal? Hence 'tis call'd *Eternal
Life, Eternal Glory, a never-fading Crown,
an everlasting Kingdom, Joy and Pleasure
forevermore.* So (you know) the Scripture
speaks of it, as that which is its Crown,
and Perfection: hence we read of *being
for ever with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4. 17.* to
be with the Lord is sweet: *Peter* found
it so: all the Saints in their measure
find it so here. But to be with the Lord
[for,

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[for ever], that makes it infinitely sweet indeed; thus and thus [for ever] in the bosom of my Father's love, and there [for ever] in the views of my Redeemers glory; and there [for ever] joyed in with an innumerable company of Angels, in loving, praising, admiring, adoring, and singing Hallelujahs to God and the Lamb; and this [for ever]; to be fully swallowed up in the Divine life, the Divine will, the Divine presence, the Divine fulness, and this [for ever]; to be set above all sin, to be delivered from an unavoidable necessity of sinning, to an absolute impossibility of sinning, and this [for ever]. Oh how sweet, how glorious is this! this one word Eternity, or for ever, is that which puts great sweetness into it. Again, this Eternity that indeed puts weight into the miseries and torments of the damned: what were the fire of Hell, were it not unquenchable fire? what were the Worm there, were it not a never-dying Worm? When the Scripture would speak of the exceeding greatness and severity of those torments, (you know) it is in this language: *There the Worm never dies, and the Fire is never.*

never quenched, *Mark 9. 44.* these Miseries and Torments are eternal; and indeed Hell would be no Hell, in comparison, had it not Eternity in it. Most weighty is the meditation which I have read in a learned and holy man to this purpose: O Eternity! Eternity! O never-ending Eternity! O Eternity that can be measured by no spaces of time; that can be perceived or apprehended by no humane intellect or understanding: how unconceivably dost thou augment the torments of the damned! And but a few lines after, he again cries out, O Eternity! Eternity! thou, and thou alone dost aggravate the torments, the punishment of the damned, beyond all measure. Heavy is the punishment of the Damned because of its sharpness, its extensiveness, its universality, these being all Plagues and Punishments in it; but says he, it is most heavy, because of its Eternity. Oh 'tis this indeed that makes it intollerably great and heavy. O not only to be banished from God and Christ, to be driven from the Beatifical Vision, but to be banished and driven from hence for ever. O doleful! to be in the flames, to suffer the vengeance of Eternal Fire, to be sinning, and always
 bearing

bearing the punishment of Sin; and all this [for ever;] O this makes it out of measure heavy, thus, and always thus, under the Wrath of God, and for ever so! this puts weight into it. Thus you see a little of the weight of Eternity. O contemplate it daily.

3. Consider and contemplate how doleful a thing it will be to miscarry forever; and on the other hand what a wide door of Mercy there is open to you, and the fair opportunity you have of making a blessed provision for your Souls and Eternity.

1. Consider and contemplate how dolefull a thing it will be to miscarry for ever; to perish eternally; the more worth there is in the Soul, and the greater weight there is in Eternity, the more doleful it will be to perish or miscarry, as to the interest of them: to miscarry in our Estate; in our Trade, in our Name, in the change of our condition in this World, or the like, this is sad, and sinks many; but Oh what is this to the miscarriage of the Soul for ever! what is this to a miserable Eternity, to the loss of God, of Christ, of the Comforter, of Heaven, and Eternal Life? what is this to the Wrath of God, to the Vengeance of Eternal Fire, to utter Darknes,

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to blackness of darkness for ever. O Sirs !
to have Infiniteness and Eternity com-
bine against you to make you miserable
and to be for ever as miserable as Infi-
niteness and Eternity can make you, (as
assuredly you will in case you neglect to
make provision for your Souls, and the
future life) O how dreadful, how doleful
will this be ! and what bitter Lamentati-
ons will it fill you with for ever ! Did
Esaú weep when he had lost his Birth-
right ? and did *Lysimachus* upbraid him-
self, and bewail his folly, for parting with
his Kingdom for a draught of water ? O
then how will you weep and wail, and
even tear and torment your selves for e-
ver for your sin and folly, when you shall
find, that for a little of this World, for the
satisfaction of a Lust, for a few dreggy
drossy pleasures, and sensual delights, or
perhaps through a meer sloth of Spirit,
you have lost your Souls, and have plun-
ged your selves into an infinite Ocean of
Eternal wo and misery, whence there
is no redemption for ever for you ! Pray
lay that Scripture to heart now, *Luk. 13.*
27, 28: Depart from me, says Christ, all
ye workers of Iniquity: Depart, here is
the Doom that will pass at last upon
every

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every unrepenting, unbelieving Sinner, every Soul that makes not ready for a dying hour; well, and what then? *there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you thrust out.* O Sirs, when you shall see such and such lodged safe in Heaven, in the Bosom of Christ, and your selves shut out; and not only so, but cast into utter darkness, as you have it added, *Mat. 18. 12.* When you shall see your selves shut up in the Infernal Pir, and there seal'd up under God's eternal wrath; O then ye will weep and gnash your teeth indeed; then your own Conscience will be eternally a second Hell to you, tearing and tormenting your Souls in the remembrance of your Sin and Folly, in neglecting to prepare for, and make sure of a better State. Think of these things ere it be too late.

2. Consider and contemplate what a wide Door of Mercy there is open to you, and what a fair opportunity God gives you, to make a blessed provision for your Souls and Eternity. What shall I say? why Sirs, the way of Salvation is plain to you, and you are daily called

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called to the Marriage-supper of the Lamb: the great King of Heaven invites you to come and partake of his Gospel-Feast, by one and another Servant of his which he sends to you, he lets you know that all things are ready, all that your Souls can need to make them happy for ever: Christ is ready, and in him Life is ready, Grace is ready, Peace is ready, Pardon is ready, a compleat Righteousness for your justification and acceptation with God is ready, Heaven is ready, Salvation is ready, and withal he bids you come, yea he earnestly importunes and solicites you to come and feast your Souls upon these things: he freely and frequently offers himself and all to you, intreating your acceptance: yea more, he opens the arms of his Love to you, assuring you of most cordial welcom, and ready reception, notwithstanding all your sins and miscarriages, *He that cometh unto me, I will by no means cast out, Joh. 6. 37.* Let him be who and what he will, a young or an old Sinner, a small or a great Sinner, a Sinner that hath stood it out against me a little or a long time, I will not cast him out: my Grace is free, my Fulness is large and sufficient.

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Blood is precious, and has an infinite virtue in it, my Spirit is powerful and efficacious, I am every way mighty to save, able to ~~save to the utmost~~ *all that come to God by me*; yea 'tis my work and business to save, my Father seal'd and sent me for that end, and for that end came I into the World, and there did and suffered such things as I did; and I may not, I will not cast off any poor Soul that will come and partake of me and my Fulness, and that would fain be helped on towards Life and Blessedness: This is really the language of Christ to poor Sinners; yea more, he sends his Spirit to enlighten, to convince, to perswade, to draw and allure them, and he does move in them, and strive with them: O what a wide door of mercy is there here open to you, Sirs! and how fair is your opportunity of preparing for, and making sure of a blessed Eternity? O accordingly as you love your Souls, and would live for ever, come into Christ, come and apply and improve him in a way of believing, for the good of your eternal Souls: in his strength set upon repenting, believing work, the work of your Souls and Eternity

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nity; and your day being so bright, as indeed it is, O labour to know the things of your peace in your day! lest neglecting them, Christ speedily say of you, as once with tears in his eyes he did of neglecting *Jerusalem*, Luk. 19. 42. *O that thou hadst known in thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* — I have done: I'll close all with that holy wish for you, my dear Congregation, and my self, that *Austin* was wont to make for himself, and his people, namely, *That as they had been often crowded together to worship God in that earthly Temple wherein he preach'd, so they might eternally live together in the Heavenly Temple above:* So my wish and desire is, That we, my Beloved, you and I, who have often been thronged and crowded together in an earthly House, may live together eternally, and eternally adore God together in our Father's House above; and if we shall never preach, and pray, hear and sing together more on Earth, (as I am apt to think we shall not) yet that we may praise, love, and admire God, and sing *Hallelujahs* to him for ever together in Heaven, *Amen, Amen.*

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